# My Jubilee
or
## Fifty Years of Artistic Life

Written by
Sims Reeves

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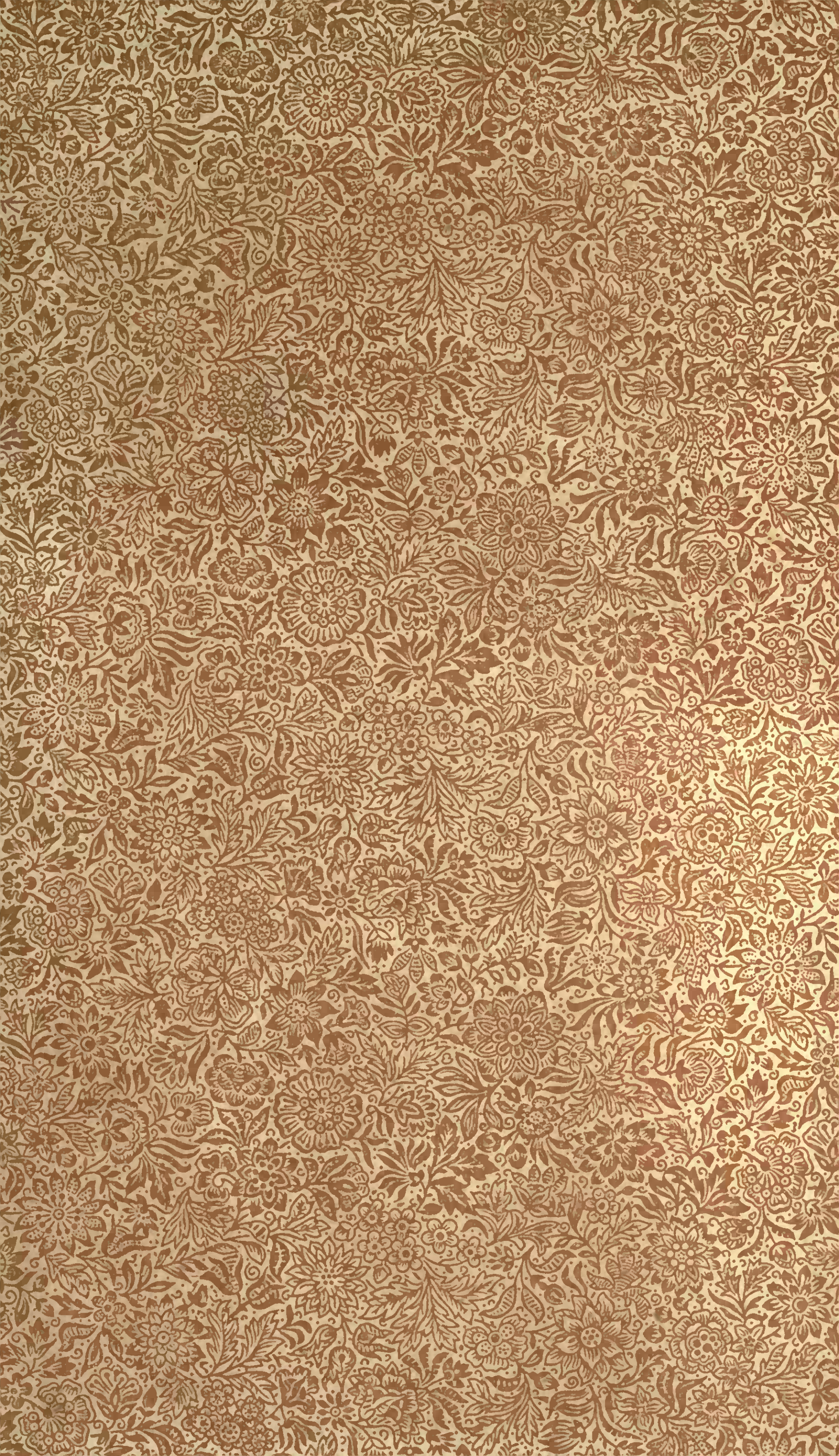
*Ex Libris*
C. K. OGDEN



# MY JUBILEE.

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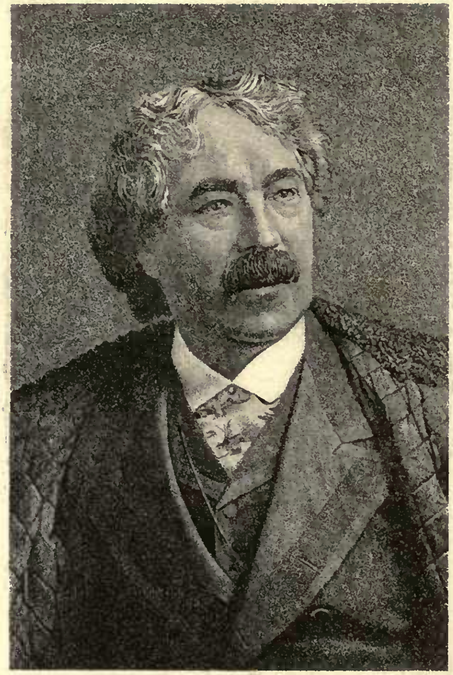

Yours sincerely
G. Ebers.

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# MY JUBILEE

OR

## FIFTY YEARS OF ARTISTIC LIFE

BY

J. SIMS REEVES

WITH SIX PLATES,

*AND A PREFACE BY THOMAS WARD.*

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# PREFACE.

FIFTY years of artistic life! What scenes and incidents, achievements and successes, joys and sorrows, are unfolded in the story of such a career, especially when the artist has, for the greater part of that period, occupied the front rank in his profession! Human interest will always centre in the record of such a life, which must necessarily be deepened when it issues in the form of an autobiography, fresh from the mint of memory, and bearing the stamp of veracity, undimmed by the shifting perspective of an editor, however gifted and sympathetic.

Such is the life of Mr. Sims Reeves, written by himself. It is told with a *naïveté* and charm which belong to the pen resolved to

> "nothing extenuate,
> Nor aught set down in malice;"

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and, while other biographical sketches of "the greatest tenor of our day" have appeared from time to time, these must all give place to *My Jubilee, or Fifty Years of Artistic Life*, not only as to authenticity, but also as to fulness of detail.

It has perhaps been inseparable from the high position which Mr. Reeves has so long occupied in his profession, that much concerning him that was apocryphal has passed into popular currency. In his case not only has distance lent "enchantment to the view," but added romance has not been wanting. The myth as to the cause of his repeated non-fulfilment of professional engagements has now received its quietus, never again, it is hoped, to be whispered with bated breath even by the most unreflecting part of the public. Reason and common sense have long since accepted the vocalist's disclaimer, when he said "I never disappoint the public without being far more grievously disappointed myself; but our frequent changes of temperature are most trying, and no care or caution can guarantee me against occasional attacks, which prohibit me for a season to leave the house, and yield my public services to that art which it is the highest ambition of my soul to forward, by all the legitimate means within my reach."

Much interest clusters round the histrionic career of Mr. Reeves. To the present generation, this is perhaps the least known portion of his eventful life. The facts are here set forth in chronological order with a vivacity and humour which will captivate the reader; moreover his association with the greatest actors of a bygone day will prove not the least interesting part of the narrative.

The determined stand made by Mr. Reeves against the constantly increasing rise in musical pitch is also referred to; and, although much diversity of opinion has existed in this country on the question, his views were supported by the highest musical authorities on the Continent. Vested interests here, as elsewhere, blocked the path to reform, and general assimilation to the French or Normal Diapason is still in the distant future.

The meridian of Mr. Reeves's career, however, was, in his ripe manhood, when—

delighting large audiences in Oratorio, not only at the Great Handel and County Festivals, but also in every large hall throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland—his name became a synonym for perfection in the vocal art. The story of his successes in this domain, as also in the realm of Opera, both English and Italian, is told *con amore*, and will undoubtedly bring to many a mind recollections of genuine pleasure never to pass away.

THOMAS WARD,
*Managing Director, London Music Publishing Co., Ld*

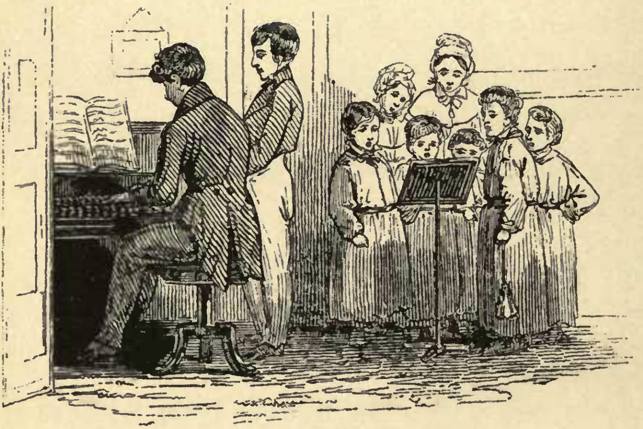
LONDON, *July*, 1889.

# CHAPTER I.

## Chapter I.

Several of my friends have done me the honour to make me the subject of biographical sketches, and even of full biographies. These, however, have all in some respects been incomplete; and now that I am entering upon the fiftieth year of my professional career, it may possibly interest a portion of that public from which I have received so many marks of favour to hear, as it were, from my own lips, the true story of my life. Nor, in this autobiography, is it by any means my intention to speak of myself alone. My fate has naturally thrown me among the greatest singers of the last half century, nearly all of whom have been personally known to me. I have been brought into contact, moreover, with no inconsiderable number of composers, conductors, and managers; and, without departing too much from the thread of my own history, I may often find occasion to speak of my various associates in connection with the musical art. If fifty years have passed since I sang for the first time in public, it is nearly sixty since I first went to the opera; for I was in the habit of attending the performances at the King's Theatre (as the theatre now known as Her Majesty's was then called) when I was a mere boy.

My father was a musician; and he not only practised the divine art, but also taught it,—in a manner which was anything but divine to me. I had learnt the musical notes almost with the notes of the alphabet; and when I was a child I had to rise, take my bath, dress, and be ready for my pianoforte lesson by five o'clock in the morning. I believe my father taught me well, but I am sure that he taught me strictly and severely. A false note on the piano was speedily followed by a blow from his violin bow, which, directed at my knuckles, never missed its aim. Of course I had no business to make a mistake: but often the means adopted for



A music lesson.

setting me right threw me into the greatest confusion; and sad, indeed, was my fate when blunders were followed by correction, and correction again by blunders. I must add that my father, in spite of his harsh mode of tuition, had the greatest possible affection for me. If he was ready to give me my lesson at five, ought not I, who went to bed so much earlier, to have been always ready by that time to receive it? while, as for false notes, it was his first duty, as a teacher, to prevent them, and the means he used were those which, unfortunately for the children of that time, were then in fashion. I shall print in its proper place a letter from my father, glowing with affection, on the subject of one of my greatest operatic successes.

Besides being taught the piano, and soon afterwards the organ, I learnt at a very early age to sing. When I was a boy of ten I could play all Handel's organ accompaniments from the original figured bases; and at the age of fourteen I was appointed to the post of organist, or at least performed an organist's duties, at North Cray Church. I also had charge of the church choir, which had been trained with considerable care.

On one occasion when I was singing in the choir, we received a visit from some distinguished amateurs, with the late Lord Shaftesbury, then Lord Ashley, among them, who had come from London specially to hear us. I had not quite liked their patronising ways, and I remember, as I looked pointedly at his lordship, singing out at the top of my voice, and with genuine fervour, this line from one of the hymns in use:

> "Room for the proud, ye sons of clay."

I was by no means the only member of my family who could sing. Both my brothers had excellent voices. Both, afterwards, became tenors. One of them, Henry, sang for many years with great success in the United States; the other, Edwin, enjoyed great reputation as a teacher.

The rector of North Cray, the Reverend Edgell Wyatt Edgell, and his sister, Miss Louisa Edgell, took great interest in the choir.

It was only on certain occasions that I played the organ; and my ordinary duties were those of *maestro di capella* and of principal soprano singer. My brother Henry was the second soprano. An excellent musician, he also played the harp accompaniments, as arranged by myself, to several hymns and anthems.

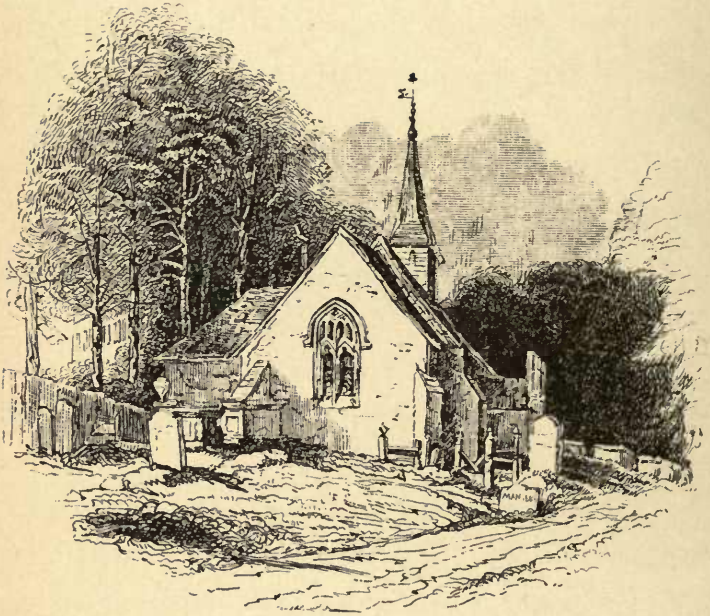
I have already said that both my brothers, when they grew up, had tenor voices. It cannot often happen that three tenor singers are found in one family. We had all three, moreover, genuine tenor voices, and sang in the proper tenor register: not the half counter-tenor voices of the present generation.

Mr. Lloyd, and Mr. J. Atkins, a basso, would frequently come down professionally to assist us in our extra performances. On these occasions we had what we termed a field day; and the rector would invite friends from the neighbourhood and from London to hear the performances. Men of eminence and rank were often present; and I have already said that I was not always pleased at their words of praise, which, as I fancied, savoured too much of patronage.

My injured feelings, however, soon recovered from the shocks unwittingly inflicted upon them; and when I came to reflect I could see nothing in the praises bestowed on my voice and singing but incentives to further study with a view to success on a larger scale. At this time, as ever afterwards, I attached the greatest importance to enunciation. To express with appropriate feeling the full meaning of the words was my first aim; and I did my best to impress my colleagues with my own convictions on this subject.

Our performances soon brought us no little reputation, and my brother Henry and myself were frequently engaged to sing at private parties in the neighbourhood. The fees derived from this source, together with the liberal assistance of the good rector and his sister, enabled us to provide ourselves with good masters.

My brother and I were frequent visitors at the rectory, where we sometimes remained for weeks together. On these occasions Mr. Edgell did not allow us to neglect our studies. Certain hours were every day set apart for educational



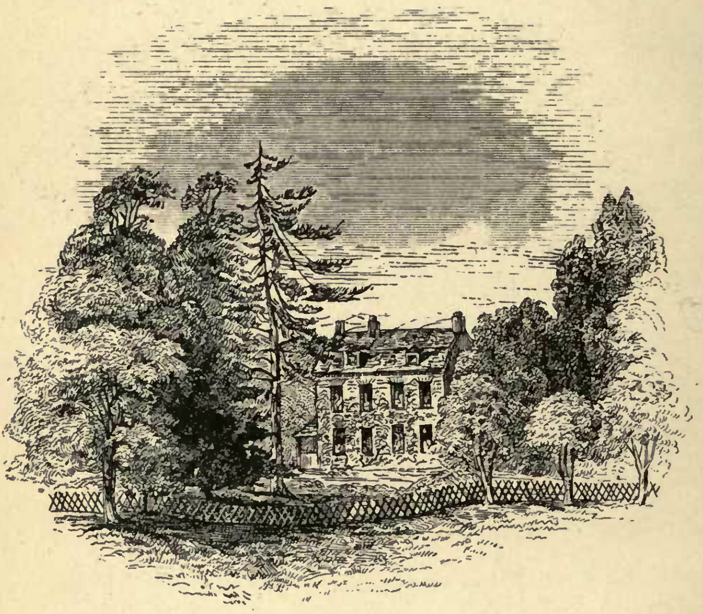
North Cray Church

purposes, when we received instruction in English, Latin, French and Italian.

We were, I am sorry to say, far from being diligent students, and we had now and then recourse to a bit of cheating. Thus, we would write our exercises on very long strips of paper, and so fasten them under the collar of our coat that either one of us could repeat his lesson without having learnt it, by reading it from the back of the other. I regret these acts of dishonesty even to this day. Our devices, which seemed at the time nothing but ingenious, strike me now as mean. The rector was so good, so patient, that it was disgraceful to take advantage of him.

The only time I found Mr. Edgell really angry was when I had committed a terrible breach of confidence. He was the owner of a very beautiful thorough-bred mare. From time to time, my brother one day, and myself another, were allowed to ride her, accompanied always by the groom. But on the occasion in question I took French leave, and, saddling the mare myself, mounted her and boldly rode forth. I soon found that she was awfully fresh, and I had not been out more than a quarter of an hour when she suddenly pricked up her ears, stood stock still, listening intently for about half a minute, and then bolted. Unable to hold her I gave her the reins, and thought only of sticking to her until she got tired. The secret of her sudden start was that she had heard at no great distance the cry of a pack of hounds. I was too much occupied at the time with my own precarious position to hear them. Away, meanwhile, she flew till all at once a labourer with an enormous faggot of wood on his back came suddenly before us. She shied, swerved round, and made a big leap; which had the effect of throwing me upon a heap of stones prepared for the mending of the roads. I might have been hurled head first upon the mass of flints with their points upwards. Fortunately, I landed in a sitting posture. I was much cut, and bled a good deal, and there were sundry rents in my garments. Had I fallen on my head, there might have been an end of young Sims Reeves, and, in the words of Pope:

> "The world had wanted many an idle song."



North Cray Rectory.

Fortune, however, favoured me as, with a generous hand, she has done throughout my long career.

The mare found her way back to the stable, I following her, much hurt and very much dejected. The return of the mare riderless created considerable alarm at the rectory. When I, in my turn, arrived, I was at once summoned to the study, where I received a sound box on the ear and a doubtless equally sound lecture, though I was not in a condition to appreciate it at the time. I really, however, felt very sorry for the fault I had committed; and on the following day I endeavoured to make up for my disobedience (for we had been cautioned against riding the mare without express permission) by doing my utmost. I worked with heart and soul; for I loved the rector, and I felt that I could not do enough to atone for my misconduct.

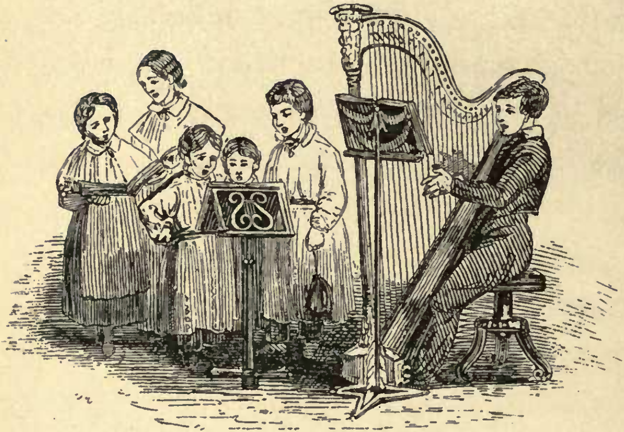
This, during our long intercourse, was the only disagreeable incident that took place. Not only were my brother and myself constantly entertained at North Cray Rectory; we were also frequent visitors at the Misses

Edgell's house in London. They lived at No. 40, Lower Grosvenor Street, and here we frequently sang and played at the parties given by the rector and his sisters. Here, also, we were often put through our studies. The ladies had a box at the King's Theatre, where, as I have previously mentioned, my brother and myself were often taken. Here we heard all the great Italian singers of the time, including Grisi, Persiani and Brambilla; Rubini, Ivanoff, Mario and Moriani; Tamburini, Colletti and Fornasari; Lablache, and many others.

I never liked Tamburini; his style was affected and meretricious. He looked and carried himself well on the stage; but Giorgio Ronconi, to use a slang expression, knocked him into a cocked hat both as actor and singer.

We were taken by our dear good friends to all that was worth seeing and hearing in London; picture galleries, theatres and concerts. Occasionally, too, we went with them into the country, to the seat of the rector's father, Mr. Wyatt Edgell, of Milton Place, Egham.

At archery meetings, musical soirées, and



The North Gray Choir

other social gatherings, my brother and myself were indeed made much of. Those were veritably happy days. How different was the society of fifty years ago from that of the present time! So at least it appears to me.

During the years 1837 and 1838, while continuing my studies in London, I used to go down to North Cray on Wednesdays and Sundays in order to direct the performances of my choir. The larger London theatres soon became familiar to me; and before long I was enamoured of the smell of the footlights, and had quite made up my mind to adopt the stage and dramatic singing as my profession. I tried my luck as an amateur, and succeeded so well that I made an application to an agent, a Mr. Turnour, who occupied apartments in Little Russell Street, Covent Garden, and who, on inscribing my name in his books, promised to do his best to assist me. Without much delay, he procured me an opening at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle-on-Tyne; and here, in the month of December, 1839, I made my first appearance on any stage. Before speaking of my *début*, I may mention that I had studied harmony and counterpoint under Mr. H. Callcott, and that my principal pianoforte professor was Mr. John Cramer. I had also mastered more than one orchestral instrument, including the violin, violoncello, oboe, and bassoon. All Bach's fugues I could now play by heart. I was a particularly good violinist; so good, indeed, that at the beginning of my public career I not unfrequently undertook the duties of orchestral leader.

Although I resolved for my own part to be a singer, my father thought it prudent to teach me a trade on which, in case of failing in my profession, I could fall back. The precaution was a wise one, though happily it was not needed; and it would be well if all fathers would remember the fact that in connection with every art there is a craft. A youth who, in his ambition wishes to become a great historical painter, may find it useful to be qualified to earn money as a wood engraver. An unappreciated poet may save himself from starvation by a sufficient knowledge of short hand to enable him to report speeches; and in like manner it is well that a composer or a singer without any private means to live upon should, in case of non-success, be in a position to turn an honest penny by the exercise of one of the many trades connected with the musical art. I was taught to engrave music plates, and, had I suddenly lost my voice, could have earned my living by that occupation. That I was much dissatisfied at being taught a mere trade will readily be believed. But I was sufficiently conscientious in this, as I hope in other matters, to consider it my duty to carry out my father's wishes. I accordingly set to work with a will and determination to do my best; and I succeeded in mastering the business which, in case of failure as a singer, I was to take up.

Meanwhile, I had not neglected my musical studies, working at them most diligently after business hours. In a comparatively short time I had met with enough success as a singer to justify me in abandoning all thought of trade—to which I had always entertained the strongest objection; and great was my joy when I found myself at liberty to devote myself entirely to the only career I cared for.

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# CHAPTER II.

## CHAPTER II.

IN my musical education, one strange mistake had been made. I had been trained as a baritone; and it was not until after I had sung for some time on the operatic stage that Nature, and my own self-consciousness, taught me that I was a tenor. There have been instances, as I have elsewhere remarked, of singers coming out as ténors and finding afterwards that they had baritone voices. Lablache, for example, is said to have played the part of Count Almaviva in his youth, of Figaro in middle age, and of Dr. Bartolo when he was beginning to get old; thus falling from tenor to baritone, and from baritone to bass. But apart from my own case, I never knew any instance of a singer beginning as a baritone and afterwards becoming a tenor until a few years ago I found that the eminent vocalist, M. Jean de Reszké, had gone through precisely the same experience.

In 1839, when I had just entered upon my eighteenth year, I appeared for the first time on the public stage at Newcastle as the Gipsy boy in *Guy Mannering*, the performance being given for the benefit of a tenor of that time, the late George Barker. This was during a starring engagement of Mr. and Mrs. Woods.

I at once succeeded; in proof of which it need only be mentioned that I was offered immediately afterwards the important parts,—baritone parts, be it observed,—of Count Rodolfo, in the *Sonnambula*, and of Dandini in *La Cenerentola*. My impersonations were much applauded. But I was destined some years later to call forth far greater enthusiasm in the character of Elvino, the tenor, in Bellini's delightful opera.

When the season at the Newcastle-on-Tyne theatre was at an end, I went to Worcester, where I played walking gentleman, small parts in tragedies, and tenor, not baritone, parts in operettas, and even a part in the pantomime. Anything that was assigned to me I cheerfully undertook, determined to make my way, anxious to improve my experience, and always looking forward to higher things, though they might not be immediately within my reach.

At the end of the Worcester engagement, I came back to London, where I accepted an engagement at the Grecian Theatre. This I did mainly with a view to stage practice; and not caring to appear in my own name I adopted the familiar one of Johnson. Having now found, through personal experience, the true register of my voice, I placed myself in the hands of Mr. Hobbs and Mr. T. Cooke for training as a tenor; and before long I was offered an appearance at Drury Lane, then under the direction of Macready.

The history of Macready's management fills a bright page in the annals of the drama, and it was an honour to be engaged at his theatre, no matter in what capacity. All I was offered was the post of second tenor. I gladly accepted it. Though I was nominally in a subordinate position, my duties involved the singing of such parts as that of Ottocar in *Der Freischütz.* On many occasions, too, I was called upon to sing the vigorous, expressive air, " Come, if you dare," in Purcell's *King Arthur.* This war-song of the Britons has survived the rest of the work, which dates from two centuries back, having been first produced in the year 1691.

The pleasure produced by Purcell's music is derived, as Dr. Burney well puts it, "from his having turned to the true accents of his mother tongue those notes of passion which an inhabitant of this island would breathe in such situations as the words describe. And these indigenous expressions of passion Purcell," he continues, " had the power to enforce by the energy of modulation, which, on some occasions, was bold, affecting, and sublime." Without going so far as Dr. Burney, who maintains that in " the accent, passion, and expression of English words the vocal music of Purcell is sometimes as superior to Handel's as an original poem to a translation," I could not be blind to the energy and appropriateness with which our English composer has marked in music the accent and the true meaning of the words he was setting. The famous war-song being entrusted to me, I could not but seek to do justice to it; and having, in the character of a British warrior, to address a host of enemies threatening me from the rear, I, of course, knew that in singing defiance to them I must not shun their gaze.

It was equally necessary, however, that I should not turn my back upon the audience. This, on rare occasions, an actor may be justified in doing. But for a singer to do so at any time would be a positive absurdity. We sing that we may be heard, and for that reason cannot under any circumstances turn our back directly upon the audience.

In my difficulty I adopted one of those compromises which art so constantly requires. I stood sideways so that I could at the same time menace the advancing foe and allow my menaces to be heard by the attentive audience. Why, I wonder, did not the intelligent manager arrange for my enemies to enter from one of the side wings? This, however, did not suit the stage picture as conceived by him; and nothing would satisfy him but that I should sing my war-song in such a position that though my daring adversaries would hear it the audience would not.

At the end of the performance Mr. Macready fell into one of his customary rages and gave me my dismissal. I had not, however, been long absent from the theatre when he sent for me and asked me to resume my engagement. But I was to do so only on conditions, and these conditions were to be imposed absolutely by the tyrannical manager: for this, with all his merit, Macready emphatically was. Delighting in the exercise of arbitrary power, the stern director informed me that for disobeying his orders I was sentenced to pay a fine of five pounds; and on consenting most unwillingly to be mulcted in this sum I was at liberty once more to play the part of Ottocar and to sing (more or less with my back to the audience) Purcell's magnificent war-song.

In vain had I remonstrated with him on his injustice; and I ended by telling him that though I was only beginning my career, I might some day be in a position as distinguished as his own, and that, the opportunity presenting itself, I should feel bound to mark my sense of his conduct in a befitting manner. Many years afterwards, when Mr. Macready, on his retirement from the stage, was arranging a farewell benefit, he wrote to ask me to sing for him. In declining to do so I did not fail to remind him of the circumstances which left me no option but to pursue this course.

But the vexation caused to me by Macready when he not only deprived me of money justly earned, but treated me moreover as though my arguments and representations were worth nothing as opposed to his absolute word,—my reason undeserving of a moment's consideration when in contradiction to his will,—this can never blind me to the fact that he was indeed an admirable manager. He reformed the theatre too, not in an artistic sense alone. Objectionable characters were excluded from the audience department. Macready for the first time rendered an English theatre a place which decent women could attend without fear of being shocked by gaudy neighbours.

There is no record, I believe, of Mr. Macready's life, except the one written by himself, and the admirable memoir by Sir Frederick and Lady Pollock; and in neither of these works should we look for any of his domineering habits, which sometimes caused pain to his subordinates, and at other times placed the great man himself in very comic situations.

When, for instance, he was playing in *Othello* at Birmingham, he was rarely satisfied at rehearsals with the position taken up on the stage by Mr. G. V. Brooke, the Iago of the cast. "Be good enough to stand *there*, sir," he exclaimed, indicating a particular spot.

Mr. B. went sufficiently near, but did not stand on the precise point which Macready had in his eye.

"There, sir; I said there!" he exclaimed.

Iago changed his position, but somehow did not succeed in standing exactly where Othello wished to see him.

"Bring a nail, carpenter," cried Macready at last; "a nail and a piece of chalk."

"The carpenter brought the nail, drove it into the boards, and with the piece of chalk made a small circle round it.

"There, sir, there can be no mistake now," cried Macready; "let us go on with the rehearsal."

Iago stood firmly, perhaps too firmly, on the spot marked out for him: but Macready was satisfied, and all went well. When, however, in the evening, the performance took place, the first scene between Othello and Iago was played with variations which took the public by surprise. Instead of looking at Othello, Iago gazed inquisitively on the ground, walked to and fro, and appeared lost in an anxious search for some object he could not discover. At last Macready's patience,—never of a very enduring kind,—gave way, and he called out:

"Mr. Brooke, for God's sake be quiet; what are you doing?"

"I am looking for the nail, Mr. Macready," replied Mr. Brooke, in a stentorian voice.

The audience was mystified, but also much amused, while Macready was, of course, in a towering rage.

When Mr. Brooke had sufficiently enjoyed the situation, he dismissed all thought of the nail and went on with his part in the usual manner.

Mr. Brooke was not the only actor who preferred to forfeit his engagement rather than put up with Macready's intolerable insults. There was an old man at the ——— Theatre, who, being short, slim, and more or less boyish in figure, had been cast for the part of Albert, Tell's son, in Sheridan Knowles's drama of *William Tell.* At the rehearsals he had not stood with the apple on his head precisely as Macready wished: nobody ever did stand exactly in accordance with that gentleman's desires. The veteran Albert was cuffed, shaken, sworn at, but could not be made to stand in what his tormentor deemed a suitable position. At last, however, he was forced into something like an appropriate attitude, and Macready told him, with a final curse, at his peril to stand otherwise when, that same evening, the public performance took place.

Meanwhile, the aged boy had determined to have his revenge; and when William Tell's great scene arrived, and the famous actor,—who had by this time fully persuaded himself that he was not William Charles Macready but William Tell—was about to fire the traditional arrow, the wicked Albert, instead of standing like a good child to be shot at, exclaimed, "No yer don't," and suddenly dipped and disappeared.

The outburst of rage called forth by Albert's treacherous conduct will scarcely bear description.

Strangely enough, this passionate man did not consider himself sufficiently irascible by nature to depict anger on the stage, and therefore employed (as I myself have seen) two unfortunate supers, whose business it was to make faces at him, tread on his toes, kick him, and otherwise provoke him until he was in a state of exasperation bordering on the demoniac.

"More!" he would growl, as he stood at the wing preparing to make a terrific entry; "more, you beasts!" until an exceptionally severe kick happening to coincide with the moment for his sudden appearance, he would knock down each of his hired tormentors and rush upon the stage like a maniac.

"When, some years later, Macready was playing at the Princess's Theatre under the management of Mr. Maddox, he was once subjected to a practical joke of rather an elaborate kind. Although the direction of the theatre was in the hands of Mr. Maddox, Macready could tolerate no superior; and in regard to his principal actor the master of the establishment was *un maître qui obéit.*

Mr. Maddox longed to be revenged upon Mr. Macready for the harsh treatment that he had from time to time experienced at his hands. He did not dare to offend him openly. He was resolved, all the same, to have some sport at his tormentor's expense; and with much slyness and subtlety he at last carried out his design.

Mr. Macready, the intimate friend of Sir Edward Bulwer (as the author of *Pelham* was called in those days), Charles Dickens, Serjeant Talfourd, and other distinguished writers of the time, prided himself on his literary faculties (he once edited Pope), and on his keen literary perceptions. It was on this point that Mr. Maddox had determined to wound him. There was at that time a singer at the Princess's Theatre named Sinclair Jones, if I remember rightly: a basso profondo, an impersonator, in any case, of inferior characters. In his leisure moments, which, as his parts were of no importance, must have been abundant, Mr. Jones occupied himself with playwriting. He had several tragedies in his portfolio, and had of course asked Mr. Maddox to produce them. Equally, as a matter of course, Mr. Maddox had declined to do anything of the kind. One day, however, pondering over an insult, or perhaps a mere slight, which he had received at the hands of Macready, Mr. Maddox bethought himself of Sinclair Jones's tragedies. He sent for Jones, and suggested to the delighted Basso that it might be a good idea to read one of his plays to Macready.

Jones jumped at the notion, and asked which of his plays he had better submit to the great actor. Mr. Maddox, who had not read one of them, told the hitherto unacted author to choose the one which seemed to him most suitable. Jones selected what he considered his masterpiece,—*Caractacus*, I believe it was called,—and hurried with it at the end of the second act to Macready's dressing room.

Maddox seems to have told Sinclair Jones that to ingratiate himself beforehand with

Macready he would do well to consult him about his costume as one of the minor characters in *Henry VIII.*; and, without at the time saying a word about the drama which he proposed to inflict on the unconscious tragedian, he begged Macready's permission to present himself in his dressing-room before appearing on the stage, in the hope that his dress, which he declared he had chosen with every regard to historical and pictorial propriety, might meet with the approbation of so eminent a judge. Macready was making up for the part of Cardinal Wolsey, painting his face, powdering his chin, and muttering to himself, according to his habit, with the view of inducing perfect self-delusion as to the character he was on the point of assuming: "I am not Macready! I am Wolsey; Cardinal Wolsey!" when suddenly a tap was heard at the door.

"Come in, Henry the Eighth," he called out. "Can it be Harry, my royal master?"

Enter Sinclair Jones, grotesquely but, in his own opinion, magnificently attired, bearing beneath his arm a huge roll of manuscript.

The illustrious tragedian, still making up for his part, continued to mutter, as he powdered his chin: "I'm Wolsey, Cardinal Wolsey, I'm not Macready," when suddenly he became conscious of his visitor's presence.

"Oh, Mr. Sinclair Jones! You want me to look at your costume?"

He turned slowly round, and, staring at the apparition before him, exclaimed: "Mother Shipton, by God!"

Poor Sinclair Jones had produced a bad first impression. But, without losing his presence of mind, he unfolded the manuscript, which Macready had probably mistaken for Mother Shipton's famous prophecy, and began to explain that the mysterious scroll was a drama, written specially for the most celebrated actor of modern times, and that Mr. Maddox had told him to read it to the eminent tragedian without delay.

Macready, when he had recovered from his astonishment, reflected that there might perchance be some merit in Mr. Jones's play; otherwise, indeed, how would the manager have had the presumption to commend it to his notice?

"In how many acts?" asked Macready, turning over the leaves of the manuscript.

"Five, sir ; the regulation number. It is a poetic drama," replied Mr. Jones.

"Ah, I see; it is in blank verse," replied the tragedian. "The verse limps at times," he continued, as he read the opening speech, "indeed, it halts consumedly."

Mr. Jones explained that he was no slave to pedantic rules, and that some of the first of modern poets had ventured at times to trifle with metrical symmetry.

"Well, well," replied Macready ; "but your piece is long. Not only are there five acts, but each act has the dimensions of two ordinary ones."

"That need not matter, sir ; not in the least," replied Mr. Jones. "I have written it freely ; but, an actor myself, I know what stage requirements are, and you are at liberty to cut it wherever you think fit."

At this unauthorlike suggestion, Macready exploded.

"Do you know, man," he cried, rising from his chair, and pointing to the door, "do you know that Sir Edward Bulwer passes sleepless nights polishing a single sentence for me? And you talk of writing freely, and of not caring whether your work be cut! Leave me this instant, and take this thing with you."

Mr. Jones retired with as much dignity as he could command under such trying circumstances, and hastened to tell Mr. Maddox of the uncourteous reception he had met with at the hands of the eminent tragedian.

Another joke,—this one purely of a practical kind,—which was played upon Mr. Macready when he was at the Princess's, had no humour to recommend it, unless, as was suggested at the time, Mr. Maddox was at the bottom of it. An inferior actor, seeing Macready at the foot of the staircase, and, mistaking him for an intimate friend attired in a similar costume, seized him by the back of the trousers and the scruff of the neck and ran him upstairs. The mistake may or may not have been due to the prompting of the keen and vengeful manager.

Macready was in any case run upstairs in the manner described, and it is said that, when he found himself at the top of the staircase, he turned round and uttered a solemn curse.

Mr. Maddox, as opera manager, produced several interesting works, including a version of Flotow's *Martha,* given in English before the existence of the Italian version; a translation of the same composer's *Âme en peine,* represented under the title of *Leoline;* and, above all, Edward Loder's excellent opera *The Night Dancers,*—on the subject of Giselle, He once made me pressing offers, but I never saw my way to accept them.

"Sixty pounds a week, my boy!" he once tempted me with; and I told him (I was then beginning my career) that if he wanted me only to sing three times a week I would consider his proposal.

"Always willing to meet your views, my boy," he rejoined. "Six times a week would keep you better before the public; but I will do anything to oblige you. Make it three a week, and I will give you twenty-five."

At last Maddox proposed, as he put it, "to split the difference," but still I could not accept.

He informed me, as a means of bringing me to terms, that Rubini was studying English, and would soon be in London to make his first appearance in English opera, adding, with a knowing wink, "but can *he* sing?" This daring suggestion, though it amused me, left me unmoved.

Some days afterwards, when all negotiations between us were at an end, he passed me in the street, talking to a friend, and said in a loud voice, without looking at me: "Tenors are as cheap as mackerel. You can get them three a shilling. They will soon be the price of herrings,—a penny a-piece all round."

I have certainly no prejudice against Jews, among whom, I may add, I have found some of my most enthusiastic admirers. Thus when I have been singing at the Standard Theatre the house has been half full of these ancient, traditional lovers of music. Once, I remember, when the doors had just been opened and the theatre was already full, an ancient Israelite, accompanied by his wife, most sumptuously attired, presented himself at the box office, and demanded two places, wherever they could be given to him.

"Everything is let," was the reply.

"But I must have them."

"You cannot," said the money-taker.

"But I have brought my wife," said the Israelitish amateur. "There she is in her turban, put on for the occasion. Look at her. Isn't she beautiful? Take ten bob, and let us in. . . . Yer can't do it? Then I'll empty my pocket. Take vot yer like."

It may fairly be supposed that my friend had not in his pocket more than say fifteen shillings. I believe his eloquence and his offers at length procured him admission in some odd corner of the immense building.

Macready would never tolerate visitors behind the scenes, with the exception, of course, of authors whose works were being performed or were about to be produced. Sir Edward Bulwer (Lord Lytton) was, I remember, frequently in the green-room. But the rich idlers, whose presence is not only permitted, but encouraged and invited at some theatres, were never, under Macready's management, allowed to pass the stage door.

I have always set my face strongly against the practice of those dissolute, unprincipled managers, who, with a view to the replenishment of their badly-filled exchequer, favour the presence behind the scenes of men with as little morality but more money than themselves; men who attend the theatre simply to pervert any vain or thoughtless girl they can get to listen to them.

How often, some forty years ago, have I seen with disgust at Her Majesty's Theatre a certain painted and bedizened Duke seeking to make as evil a use as possible of his celebrated diamonds; with several other profligates of the same stamp.

So strongly do I feel on this subject, that I cannot refrain from here reproducing a story which I have told before of incidents that occurred at another theatre where English, not Italian, opera was at the time being performed.

Preferring not to give the true name of the corrupt manager, nor of his corrupting friend, the haunter of the side scenes, I have called the former Mr. Moncrieff, and the latter Lord Fitz-Ordinary.

During the height of the London season I was singing in *Fra Diavolo* and other operas at ——— Theatre; the business was enormous, money being turned away nightly at the doors.

Our manager was a clever business man, of good appearance and manner; a facile linguist and penman, he occupied a prominent position on two religious periodicals of high repute in clerical circles.

Yet it was whispered that his private life was far from stainless; and though I knew of nothing to justify these rumours, I could not bring myself to like or trust him; and perhaps this feeling became strengthened by the deference which marked his bearing towards me.

His *suaviter in modo* pleased the public, however, and Mr. Spicer Moncrieff was held in high regard by the non-professional world. A man over forty, he was always expensively, though quietly dressed; and enjoyed the privilege of honorary membership at more than one club. But "knowing ones" winked aside when it was mentioned in the papers that Mr. Moncrieff had addressed another public meeting, advocating principles of universal philanthropy.

"I'll tell his wife of his goings on," I heard our leading baritone say once, during a rehearsal.

"You'll never get the chance," growled the basso profundo, to whom this remark was addressed. "That invisible female resides somewhere among the Welsh mountains, and is always kept at a remote distance from the corrupting influence of the Drama,—ahem!"

These and like remarks denoted in what manner this theatrical Pecksniff was esteemed by his professional brethren; however, a certain nobleman, Lord Fitz-Ordinary, was his constant associate.

That this wealthy peer advanced him large sums of money, every one knew, or said they knew; but the cautious Moncrieff took care that no evidence verbal or written of these transactions should come to the knowledge of the world in general; for the manager, editor, and quasi-public moralist, belonged to that class of men whose sole guiding principle is Self and Self-interest.

This principle clearly denominated the terms of Mr. Spicer Moncrieff's agreement with myself; notwithstanding, I stipulated for an augmented chorus and orchestra, and that my attendance at rehearsals should not be imperative, and with some little difficulty obtained these concessions.

On the opening night of *Fra Diavolo,* I happened, during a "wait," to be near one of the side scenes, and my attention was at once arrested by a female chorus singer, whom I had not previously noticed. She was a girl of very striking appearance, with a lovely face, and tall, classically moulded form; her nervous, amateurish manner only seemed to make her beauty more remarkable.

I listened with some curiosity for her voice, and was surprised to hear, as it blended with those of the other singers, that it was a rich and resonant contralto of great power. That there was something mysterious about the young girl I instantly divined, and that it would be a duty to shield her from evil was also clear, for in the manager's box were Mr. Moncrieff and his friend Lord Fitz-Ordinary, both closely watching her.

At the conclusion of the act, it was not necessary for me to retire to my dressing-room, presently Mr. Moncrieff and his noble friend crossed the stage, and I found myself undergoing the honour of an introduction to the latter.

Our salutations were brief, but not shorter than, on my side at least, was desired; subsequently I went into the green room, and there stood the young chorus singer with downcast eyes, and blushing painfully, while Lord Fitz-Ordinary was apparently paying her the most devoted attention. Mr. Moncrieff hovered in the background, with an expression on his face which made me long to thrash him then and there. I crossed over to the girl, unheeding the scowl which knitted the brow of the wretched little sprig of nobility at my approach, and said to her, "You have a beautiful voice; would you not like to become a leading singer?"

"Oh, Mr. Reeves," she replied, enthusiasm overcoming for a moment her nervous shyness, "it is my one ambition."

"Have you sung in public before?"

"No," she said, while her would-be admirer fidgetted angrily at my temerity.

"Have you ever been on the stage?"

"Never until to-night."

"Your voice has been trained, though."

"It has," she admitted, with an embarrassed air.

"May I ask by whom?"

"Stage waits, Mr. Reeves," shouted the call-boy; and I hastened from the room.

Evidently my entrance and conversation had been the reverse of pleasing to the manager and his friend; indeed the latter was heard to mutter most uncomplimentary things concerning singers in general and one tenor in particular.

Never was encore so bitterly distasteful to me as the one I received in this act, the public, insisting on the repetition of my song, little imagined the state of my feelings while responding.

The ordeal over, I hurried to the green room, but no sign could I see of the chorus singer, the manager, or his "noble" friend. Time passed, and the curtain rose on the last act, still they came not, and I would have given a thousand pounds for knowledge of their movements; it provoked me so much that it became a personal feeling, and I swore that neither Moncrieff nor his friend should compass their ends if it were in my power to prevent them. At last the curtain fell, and as I was leaving the stage I happened to encounter the ballet mistress.

"Madame," I said hastily, "can I speak with you a moment; it is concerning the new lady chorus singer."

"I don't know her, sir, nor the chorus master very well."

"But you know Lord Fitz-Ordinary."

"Rather," she said, with a quick glance out of the corner of her eye. "Where is he?"

"He went away some time ago with Mr. Moncrieff, but the manager will have to come back for the closing of the house, he has to look after that."

This was cold comfort; still, it somewhat lessened my apprehension.

"Whispering my suspicions, and taking some money from my purse, I said, "You understand now, and will let me know anything that happens."

"You are very kind, Mr. Reeves; I'll do what I can."

I rushed to the dressing-room, hastily changed my stage costume, and hurried downstairs. I found the ballet mistress waiting for me; she whispered, "The manager's carriage is standing in Bedford Street, with Lord F. and the lady inside."

"Come with me at once," I said.

As we reached the spot Mr. Moncrieff was leaving the vehicle, which was on the point of starting; I ran to the horse's head, and the coachman instantly pulled up; while, taken completely aback, Mr. Moncrieff remained speechless as I opened the door.

When she saw me, the frightened girl leaned forward eagerly, saying in an appealing voice, "Take me away; oh! do take me away!"

"What the devil do you want here?" shouted his lordship, in a fury. I made him no answer, but merely saying "Come" to the girl, I helped her out of the carriage before he could detain her.

"Will you tolerate this audacious intrusion, Moncrieff?" said he savagely to the manager.

His confederate, who was as enraged as himself, endeavoured to seize the poor, scared creature, and to threaten me; but placing her in charge of the ballet mistress, I turned to him and said, "I do not fear you or any man, and if you have any grievance in the matter, bring it into a court of law."

Happily restored to her parents, the deluded girl has never since attempted to follow a theatrical career. I am not at liberty to speak further of her story, but she was of good family, her parents being intimate friends of Mr. Moncrieff's invisible wife; and whenever I happen to meet her, her downcast eyes and mantling cheeks bear evidence that the occasion of our first interview is not yet forgotten.

# Chapter III.

## CHAPTER III.

I NOW knew quite enough about singing to be sure that I was in need of further instruction; and in 1843 I went to Paris, in order to take lessons of a very distinguished master, Signor Bordogni, well known even to this day by his Exercises for the Voice, and by his Singing "Method." After a time I went, by Signor Bordogni's advice, to Milan, where I placed myself under Signor Mazzucato, director of the Milan Conservatorio, where he was also professor of æsthetics, and principal singing master. Mazzucato was a man of great ability and the composer of several operas, which, I am afraid, met with no permanent success, but which were much admired by friends at the time of their production.

Compared with the past, how different is the present mode of travelling. When, for instance, I journeyed to the Continent forty-five years ago, I went from London to Dover by coach, and put up for the night at the Ship Hotel. The next morning I made an early start, and, carried out to the small boat on the back of a sailor, had then to be rowed some distance to the steamer, which was to take us across the channel to Calais—a most uncomfortable passage in a miserable vessel, the journey occupying two hours and a half—thence by diligence to Paris. Here I made a long stay, occupying myself with my singing lessons, and with visits to all the theatres, museums, and whatever else was at that time to be seen. Then I started off to Milan. I found the journey from Paris to Milan very trying. The diligence was so stuffy and uncomfortable that I frequently changed from the interior to the exterior. I found the change refreshing; but as it was in the depth of an almost Siberian winter, the exposure to the weather was somewhat hazardous. To make matters worse, a snow-storm began, and continued for seven or eight hours. By the time we reached Chambery the snow was so deep that we had to remain there for forty-eight hours. The question now arose whether it was wise to proceed further, since the St. Gothard Pass had been pronounced dangerous; but after long hesitation we determined to risk it. Our experiences were now the reverse of cheerful. We were brought to frequent standstills, unable to move another inch until some drift of snow had been cleared away. We grew terribly fatigued, and our irritation was increased when at length the sun shone out so powerfully that it made our faces smart to a painful degree. However, we plodded on for the rest of the journey, and I shall never forget my feeling of satisfaction when we arrived at the Hôtel de Ville in Milan. I at once ordered the attendant to prepare a hot bath; and after enjoying this luxury, took a good stiff tumbler of hot brandy and water and went to bed, where I remained for four days, my bones racked with aches and the skin peeled off my face by the rays of the sun.

On the fifth day after my arrival I roused myself from the lethargy into which the journey had thrown me, and, after a bath and a hearty breakfast, felt as well as possible. The first visit I made was to the house of Il Maestro Mazzucato, to whom I delivered the letter of introduction kindly given me by Bordogni. Then I sauntered round the city, which is full of interest, and made notes of whatever arrested my attention. I returned to the hotel and looked into the visitors' book, where I found the name of Lord Ward, who was then travelling in Italy. I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance. He was very amiable, but very eccentric and self-opiniated, and he laughed at the idea of an Englishman attempting to sing in Italy—like many others whom I afterwards met in Milan. But I had gone there determined to try my luck. Force of will kept me steadily at my work; and the satisfaction of finding that I was improving in style and production of voice, gave me courage to treat with indifference the opinions of the incredulous. During my stay at Milan I availed myself of every opportunity that presented itself of visiting the art treasures, deriving immense gratification and a store of that kind of knowledge and experience which can so well be woven into the work of a lyric artist.

The next day Mazzucato called upon me. I found him agreeable and very intellectual. We had a long discussion upon singing and singers. We spoke in particular of the *timbre* of voices, and agreed that each voice had a distinct quality, so that an experienced master could at once pronounce its character by the *timbre* alone, not by its extent or range, since many voices with a tenor quality cannot reach higher than F or G; though, with proper tuition, the compass may be extended to A natural or B flat. A baritone or bass can sometimes sing with great facility, in a falsetto voice, right away up to B natural or C, but the quality of the voice is still baritone or bass. Lablache, for instance, could sing even higher than this in falsetto, and imitate a soprano voice extremely well. I would here caution all students against the injudicious practice of straining the voice for the sake of reaching high notes. This is frequently done, with the false idea that the high notes may be lost for want of practice. On the contrary, these notes should be economized with the greatest care.

At Milan I studied hard, while at the same time leading a joyous life. The students at the Conservatorio, and those outside as well, were of all nations; and at our convivial meetings there was a Babel-like confusion of tongues. Sometimes we dined together at a restaurant, where the cooking was in thoroughly Italian style, while the prices were remarkably moderate. For about two shillings per head the proprietor would serve us a repast which was really excellent, with wine,—the pleasant Italian wine so exhilarating and so little "heady,"—at discretion.

Sometimes, too, we entertained one another, turn by turn, at our own rooms. Looking back on these occasions, our gaiety, I fancy, must at times have been of a somewhat reckless kind. I possessed a favourite dog, which went astray and for some time could nowhere be found. One day, when I was entertaining a party of fellow-students, enquiries were made as to my lost setter. The roast meat had just been served, and a horrible idea suddenly occurred to me.

"He came back," I replied, "but I was so enraged with him that I killed him, and you have just eaten a portion of the animal in that excellent roast."

My friends turned pale, and it almost seemed desirable to send for a doctor. But I did not leave them long in their delusion, and the next dish was sufficiently good to dispel all thought of the former one; which, thanks to the deception I had practised, had excited some qualms.

In those days, Milan was under the rule of Austria,—the Austrian domination had still indeed sixteen long years to run; and patriotic songs, shouted forth with genuine enthusiasm, played a part in all our meetings when the dinner was at an end.

Meanwhile, I had become known, not only to the professors and students of the Conservatorio, but also to the *impresario* of the famous opera-house, La Scala, who considered that my voice, expression, and style fitted me to take the part of Edgardo in *Lucia*,—an opera which was then at the very height of its popularity.

Duprez, the greatest dramatic tenor of his time, had created the part, and had produced in it the most powerful impression. How I sang it I shall not be expected to say. Suffice it to record the fact that I was received with enthusiasm, and that at the end of the performance the illustrious Rubini came to my dressing-room to congratulate me on my success. I have at times, in the course of my long career, been exposed to the jealousy of Italian tenors; but in this connection I have always been able to console myself by remembering that from two of the greatest of Italian tenors, Rubini and Mario, I always met with the fullest appreciation and the warmest cordiality.

One incident which happened to me during my engagement in Milan recalled to me the despotic rule of Frederick the Great, when Madame Mara, having refused to sing one night at the Berlin Opera House on the plea of indisposition, was taken from her bed, and carried on a mattress, under military escort, to the theatre. I was suffering from a sore throat, and was quite unable to sing. The doctor attached to La

Scala was, however, of a contrary opinion, and, after inspecting my larynx, said that I could sing if I liked. But, as I still refused to make the attempt, the authorities resolved to make me sing by force. A squad of gendarmes called at my lodgings with a carriage, took me down to it, and drove me to the theatre. I was firm, however, in my resolve neither to injure my voice nor to pain the ears of a public which had hitherto applauded me. Frederick the Great succeeded in making Madame Mara sing; but the Austrians in Milan were less successful with me.

Rubini had played at the Scala the very part which I had just undertaken, and, by doing so, had greatly increased his already immense reputation. The more welcome, for that very reason, was the praise he so kindly bestowed upon me both in the character of singer and of actor.

"Donizetti's most admired opera" (to quote from a previous work), containing some of the most beautiful melodies in the sentimental style that he has composed, and altogether his best finale, had been produced ten years before at Naples, with Duprez in the part of Edgardo, and Madame Persiani in that of Lucia, and its popularity was then at its height. Of late years, the Italian operatic stage has not boasted one tenor who has been able to produce, in the important part of Edgardo, such effect as seemed to proceed naturally from the singing of the eminent vocalists who made their mark in the part during the first dozen years of the opera's existence. The public, at that time, used to wait anxiously for the grand scena with which the opera terminates, and which was generally regarded as the most interesting and most exacting portion of the work. This scena is, in fact, a great dramatic scene, in which the singer has only to deliver so many bars of recitative, leading to a conventional *andante* or *adagio*, which will, in its turn, be followed by the inevitable *cabaletta.* The scene is, in a picturesque sense, highly impressive; and the moonlit cemetery in which the formerly love-stricken, then indignant and enraged, now despondent and broken-hearted Edgardo has come to meditate and die, prepares the audience for the melodious "Swan Song" so appropriately introduced by the solemn, plaintive strains of the four horns.

"Edgardo has to utter no mere soliloquy in so many divisions. The scena, as before observed, is highly dramatic; and particularly fine is the effect produced by the sudden arrival of the chorus, which, interrogated by the desperate man, tells him in a placid melody, strongly contrasting with his passionate exclamations, that Lucia is no more, and thus precipitates his end. Duprez, Rubini, Moriani, were admirable in this scene; but in the ordinary way the glory of the part, formerly so much admired, would seem to have passed away: a result due partially, no doubt, to the striking success achieved by a series of very charming Lucias, — Madame Adelina Patti, Madame Christine Nilsson, and Catherine Hayes; but also, and above all, to the difficulty of finding an adequate representative of Edgardo."

Poor Donizetti, his triumphs were fast drawing to a close. Or rather, I should say, his life; for to this moment there are several operas of

Donizetti's that still keep the stage, with *Lucia, Lucrezia Borgia, La Favorita,* and *Linda di Chamouni* among them. In 1843, when I was singing at Milan, Donizetti was composing his last works,—*Linda di Chamouni* and *Don Pasquale,* both produced in 1843, the former at Vienna, the latter at Paris. It was in this year, when Donizetti was at the very height of his reputation, that he paid a visit to his old master, Simon Mayr, at Bergamo ; but of this such an interesting account is given by my good old friend, the king of his instrument, Signor Piatti, in a letter addressed to me upwards of four years ago, that I cannot refrain from producing it exactly as it stands.

"Dear Reeves," writes Signor Piatti, "I think Mr. Saltus would like to have something concerning yourself for his 'Life of Donizetti.' However, as you ask me if I remember anything about him, being my townsman, I shall be very pleased if a few recollections are of any use. At the age of six years I remember seeing Donizetti in Bergamo. He came to superintend the *mise en scène* of *L'Ago nell' imbarazzo.* It was the Carnevale, 1828, and a bitterly cold winter. The poor young maestro came to the first rehearsal without a great coat, for the simple reason that he had none at the time, nor the money to buy one. At last a friend took pity on him and lent him his own, which, being rather small, did not fit his stately figure, and felt and looked very awkward. When he left Bergamo he was not much better off in money matters, as I believe they only paid his own expenses. He was in very different circumstances when I saw him again in Bergamo, in the year 1843. In the height of his reputation he came to see his old master, Simon Mayr. A grand dinner was given to him, after which he proposed to go and fire a serenade to old Mayr. On the way some strolling musicians consented to part for a while with their instruments, and Donizetti took possession of a double bass, on which he grinded away with such force that poor Mayr appeared at the window begging that we would leave off such an awful row. I suspect my violin and Donzelli's guitar were not less culprits than the double bass. I think poor Donizetti never enjoyed himself so much. What a difference when I met him for the last time on the St. Gothard, reclining in his carriage, prostrate, helpless, with no remains of intellect in him, unable to speak and even to look up! . . . . And yet in Bergamo, before he died (1848), one has seen him shed some tears when they played to him the romanza of Pierotto in *Linda di Chamouni.* I used to see him in Vienna when, surrounded by friends, he was composing the above opera and *Don Pasquale,* at the same time taking no small part in the conversation.

"I am afraid all this will be of no use to Mr. Saltus; I merely did it to show you my willingness to do what you asked me. With kind regards to all your family,

"Believe me, sincerely yours,

"ALFRED PIATTI."

On the conclusion of the term for which I had been engaged at La Scala, I signed an agreement with Merelli, who, like Barbaja at an earlier date, directed opera houses in various parts of Italy, together with the Imperial Opera House at Vienna. By the terms of the contract, he had, according to the custom in Italy, the right of moving his singers from any one theatre to any other under his management. This was only the touring system in a limited form; and, under Merelli's direction, I travelled much, and sang at several of the principal theatres in Italy. At last, Merelli assigned me to his establishment at Vienna, and I prepared to make my *début* in the Austrian capital. Unfortunately, though in many ways an able manager, Merelli was a bad paymaster; and when I arrived in Vienna he owed me five months' salary. My contract with him had been cunningly drawn up, so that, although I had the right to recover, if I could, any money that might be due to me, I could not, by reason of non-payment, at once terminate my engagement. I was determined not, if I could avoid it, to go on singing for nothing. But I could not leave Vienna without getting my passport properly *viséd*, and it was doubtful whether, since I was under engagement at the Imperial Opera House, permission to quit Vienna would be given to me without the consent of my director.

In this difficulty, I had recourse to the good offices of Lord Burghersh, afterwards Earl of Westmoreland, whose acquaintance I had made at our Royal Academy of Music, an institution of which he was one of the principal and earliest patrons. Lord Burghersh was at that time ambassador at Vienna; and when I explained my case he at once obtained for me the necessary *visa*

# CHAPTER IV.

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AFTER my return to London, I accepted, in December, 1847, an engagement from Monsieur Jullien, who, turning his attention for a time from Promenade Concerts, had organized an English Opera Company, with a view to performing original English works and translations of the best foreign ones. The popular conductor had heard of my successes at Milan and elsewhere in Italy in the part of Edgardo; and it was in that character that he wished me to appear at Drury Lane. For the part of Lucia, he engaged Madame Dorus Gras, who, ten or eleven years previously, had made a marked success at the Paris Opera House as Alice in Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*, but whose voice was now somewhat on the wane. As designer of costumes Alfred Croquill was engaged. I have the most agreeable recollections of him, and here reproduce an amusing letter which he once sent me.

"August 12th, 1867.

"Dear Reeves,—Thank you for your very excellent photo. It is as fine as any thing I ever saw. I was at a party when I received it. The young ladies thereat made such exclamations about the 'dear thing,' that out of respect to your wife's feelings I omit them. The middle-aged ladies were equally enthusiastic, and said something about 'charming,' but whether they meant you or your voice I did not ask, as their husbands were present. One old lady, who ought to have had her epitaph written years ago, said, 'Pooh, pooh! the fellow's very well.' One old gentleman said he was told that he should have had a voice equally like yours, if it hadn't been for something in his throat. Rest satisfied with this, and

"Believe me, yours sincerely,

"Alfred Croquill."

For the responsible post of conductor he had retained the services of Hector Berlioz, a genius beyond doubt, but at that time an unappreciated one. In all his writings Berlioz has professed an absolute horror of Italian Opera; and in one of his works he expresses, apparently in good faith, his regret that when the Italian Opera of Paris was burnt down, the accident occurred during the daytime and not in the evening when *La Gazza Ladra*, or some other opera of Rossini's, was being performed.

Berlioz was undoubtedly a good conductor; but like all the conductors I have met with in England, except Costa, Balfe, Alfred Mellon, and Arditi, he thought too much of his orchestra and too little of the singers.

I met Berlioz frequently in private, and although he was always lively in general conversation, he gave me the idea of being a disappointed man. This, indeed, he must of necessity have been, seeing that such works as his *Damnation de Faust*, his "dramatic symphony" of *Romeo and Juliet*, and his *Requiem*, which now find honoured places in concert programmes wherever music is cultivated, were, during his own lifetime, regarded, except by a select few, as of no account whatever.

Every Sunday afternoon I used to meet Berlioz at the house of Jullien, where we heard portions of *La Damnation de Faust*, and other works of his; though it was his *Faust* music that left upon me the deepest impression. Berlioz, I may here remark, did not play the piano. He, indeed, rather piqued himself on not doing so; and he maintained, probably with some truth, that composers who were pianists ran the risk of being led away by their own pianoforte playing into the writing of conventional passages.

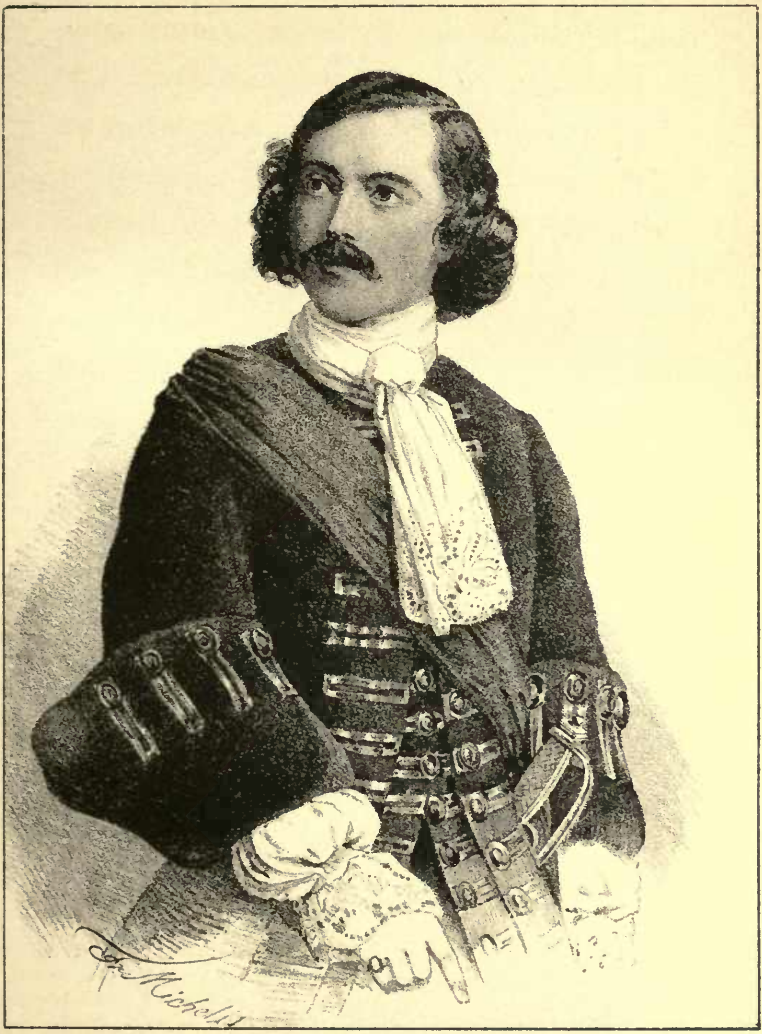
He was very anxious that Jullien should produce Gluck's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and the work was promised in the official prospectus. Berlioz somehow conceived the idea that I objected to the production of this work, or at least that I was unwilling to sing in it; and in one of his published letters he attributes its ultimate rejection to ill-will "on the part of the tenor," who did not find in his part sufficient opportunities for display. As a matter of fact, I was not only willing, but eager to appear in

Gluck's great work. The matter was referred to a select committee, formed by Jullien as a sort of parliament or council for consulting purposes alone, and included among its members Sir Henry Bishop, Sir George Smart, Mr. Planché, and Jullien himself. When the question of presenting *Iphigenia in Tauris* was discussed in solemn conclave, the conclusion arrived at was that it would never pay. Accordingly, it was never put into rehearsal.

This fine work was, however, at a later period produced with great success by Hallé at Manchester, with Santley and myself as bass and tenor, and Catherine Hayes as soprano.

But I am passing over my first appearance at Drury Lane; which introduced me for the first time to the London public at a leading theatre, and in a leading operatic character. Yet how am I to speak in detail of my own success? It would be ungrateful not to recognize the fact that it was very great; and according to some authorities, it was unprecedented.

"The most remarkable event of the evening," wrote the critic of the *Times* the morning after the first performance, "was the *début* of Mr. Sims Reeves in the character of Edgardo. So rare a success has seldom been achieved by an English vocalist. To a voice of excellent quality, flexible in the highest degree, he adds the advantage of sedulous study in Italy; and comes before the public with all the style of an Italian singer. The duet in the first act showed the complete management of the voice, and the ability of the artist to adapt it to the softest expressions of tenderness; but it left an impression that he would scarcely be equal to the terrible passion of the second act. But this act was his triumph. The malediction, delivered with the greatest force, took the audience greatly by surprise; and the zeal with which he abandoned himself to the strong emotion of the scene produced an electrical effect. We have seldom seen so much passion so naturally assumed. It was Edgardo himself, with all his native fierceness, all his torments. The sorrows of the third act were rendered with the most touching pathos, and with the nicest skill; the *piano* being sustained perfectly. At


Fr. Michelis

Sims Reeves as Edgardo.

the fall of the curtain the first impulse of the audience was a universal cry of 'Reeves.'"

Nor can I pass over the opinion pronounced on my singing and on my performance generally by so competent a judge as Hector Berlioz, who, in his *Correspondance inédite*, p. 153, writes as follows to one of his friends in France:—

"The *Bride of Lammermoor*, with Madame Gras and Reeves, cannot, in my opinion, fail to go well. Reeves has a beautiful natural voice, and sings as well as it is possible to sing in this frightful English language." "The opening of our grand opera has had," he afterwards writes, "great success. The English press praises it with one accord. Madame Gras and Reeves the tenor were re-called four or five times with frenzy; and really they both deserved it. He has a charming voice of an essentially distinguished and sympathetic character; he is a very good musician; his face is very expressive, and he plays with all his national fire as an Irishman."

Why Hector Berlioz insisted on regarding me as an Irishman, I never could make out. It may be that the French, unwilling as a rule to admit that anything good can come out of England, are more tolerant in regard to Ireland and Scotland.

When *Lucia* had had what in those days was considered a long run, it was set aside for a new opera by Balfe, in which the tenor part had been assigned to me. As the subject of the opera was identical with that of Flotow's *Martha* (both being founded on the ballet of *Lady Henriette ou le Marché de Richmond*, played at Drury Lane under Mr. Bunn's management as *Lady Henrietta; or, the Statute Fair*), I found myself cast for the character corresponding to that of Lionel in the work of the German composer; but there was nothing in my part at all equal to the romance of Lionello in the Italian version, known as *M'appari.* Balfe, moreover, though an Irishman, had omitted to introduce the "Last Rose of Summer," which contributed so largely to the success of Flotow's lively and graceful opera. Balfe had gone to work on a good operatic subject; but the libretto which Fitzball had prepared for him on this subject was by no means good. The doggerel which this "lyric poet" (so he once described himself in a court of law) had given Balfe to set was in many places absurd beyond measure. When set to music, what a ludicrous effect had such words as these,—

> "We'll come when you ring the bell,
> With a curtsey to the floor,
> And do,
> And do
> Whatever you may tell."

Why, moreover, was I made to sing a song about a chair, in no way connected with the opera, presumably introduced with the view of finding favour in the eyes of the music publishers? The sentimental song entitled, "In this old Chair my Father sat," proved, all the same, one of the successes of the work; indeed, its only success.

Balfe, with all his facility, all his gift of tuneful invention, was strangely, culpably careless as to the words he accepted for musical setting; and with equal carelessness did he set them, sometimes without taking the least heed as to whether or not such meaning as they might possess would be brought out in the music.

On one occasion, when I was singing the part of Thaddeus in the *Bohemian Girl*, with Balfe as musical conductor, I ventured to make an attempt towards bringing into something like harmony the words and the music of the opening lines in the song, "When the fair land of Poland;" but my endeavour met with no encouragement from the composer.

The words of Mr. Bunn's extraordinary poetical effusion run literally as follows:—

"When the fair land of Poland was ploughed by the hoof
 Of the ruthless invader; when Might,
With steel to her bosom and flame to her roof,
 Completed the triumph o'er Right," etc.

I studied the words, anxious, as I always was, to give dramatic significance to whatever I happened to be singing; and not liking them in themselves, could make of them absolutely nothing in connection with the music. It was bad enough to have a pause after the word "hoof," which thus became separated from the words "ruthless invader;" but it was intolerable that the nominative "Might" should be separated from its verb by drums and trumpets, as in Balfe's setting is really the case. Thinking the matter over, I found that it would be possible to make sense out of what, as it stood, was nonsense, by finishing the first clause at the word "invader," distributing the two final syllables of "invader" over five notes. Then came the close, emphasized by the beforementioned drums and trumpets; and I began the next section of the phrase with "When Might, with," etc., delivering the words as unaccented syllables, and beginning the fifth bar on the word "steel."

This was surely better than singing

> "Of the ruthless invader; when Might."

Balfe, however, did not think so.

"What was the matter with you to-night, Jack. What did you mean by breaking up the words in the 'Fair Land of Poland,' as you did?"

I explained to Balfe how absurd it was to close the musical period in the middle of an uncompleted verbal phrase. He shook his head, however, and said, "I prefer it the old way, dear boy."

As another instance of Balfe's carelessless as to the meaning of the words he set to music, I may mention that in composing "Come into the garden, Maud," he treated Tennyson's beautiful line,

> "Queen Rose of the rosebud garden of girls,"

as though the poet had written,

> "Queen of the rosebud garden of girls."

To go back to Jullien's enterprise, it would be difficult to say why it did not succeed; for no manager ever took more trouble than he did to secure effective representations. With a full recollection of the performances given by Mr. Mapleson and Mr. E. T. Smith some ten years afterwards at Her Majesty's Theatre (when Macfarren's *Robin Hood* and Wallace's *Amber Witch* were brought out), and of Mr. Carl Rosa's excellent performances, I hold that Jullien did more than any other manager has done towards securing perfect representations of operas native and foreign. Balfe's *Maid of*

*Honour*, however, fell flat; and no work was ready with which to replace it.

When it was at last found necessary to abandon the undertaking, the theatre was closed, and an animated correspondence took place in the newspapers between Madame Dorus Gras, who had not received the whole of her salary, and M. Jullien, who gave practical proof of his inability to pay it by appearing in the bankruptcy court. "But," said Madame Dorus Gras, "the manager found means to pay Mr. Reeves." This was not exactly the case. M. Jullien, however, replied to the accusation made against him of having given me my due by a letter, in which he wrote as follows:—

"In justice to Mr. Reeves I cannot omit publicly acknowledging my gratitude towards him for his kind and considerate conduct during the many difficulties which have arisen in the course of the season; he has at all times used his utmost exertions to serve the theatre, and has on several occasions waived privileges for the general good, which, as an artist of his standing, he might well have exacted."

London was now once more in its usual condition as regards English opera: it had none.

# CHAPTER V.

## CHAPTER V.

I HAD sung at concerts, I had sung in Italian opera, among the Italians and in translated Italian opera, as well as in English opera among the English; but I had not attempted sacred music until, at the beginning of 1848, I resolved to appear in oratorio. The work selected for my *début* in this, to me, entirely new line, was *Judas Maccabæus.* It was performed at Exeter Hall, under the conductorship of Mr. John Hullah, an excellent musician, a gentleman, and above all, a fine and enthusiastic lover of his art; and I had studied my part with so much earnestness, and with such a determination to bring out its full dramatic significance, that I could scarcely fail to make some impression on the public. As a matter of fact, I achieved a striking success, as to which I must, as in the case of Edgardo, let others speak for me.

"Mr. Reeves," said the *Musical World*, "was listened to with great anxiety. His declamatory powers in recitative singing no one could doubt, but it was feared his operatic style would not happily consort with the solidity and breadth of Handel's music. Besides this, the songs for the principal tenor parts in *Judas Maccabæus* were written in the composer's peculiar florid style, and required a flexibility of voice that few who had heard Mr. Reeves in *Lucia* or the *Maid of Honour* had given him credit for. Nevertheless, Mr. Reeves soon set aside all fears on that score, and proved himself in no wise less efficient in the interpretation of Handel's music than in that of Donizetti or Balfe. In the two florid songs, 'Call forth thy powers,' and 'Sound an alarm,' which require great flexibility and rapid enunciation, he was admirable. Nor was he less happy in the beautiful air, 'How vain is man,' which was given with the utmost expression, and exhibited his *cantabile* to perfection. Mr. Reeves obtained enthusiastic demonstrations from the audience after each song."

I now accepted an engagement from the Sacred Harmonic Society, and appeared once more as Judas Maccabæus at the opening concert. The performance was for the benefit of the English workmen who, on the principle of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" being proclaimed by the Republic of 1848, had at once been expelled from France. The *Musical World* was kind enough to say on this occasion that the principle attraction of the evening was "the appearance of Mr. Sims Reeves. This gentleman," it added, "on whom it seems now to be understood that the mantle of Braham is destined to fall, was vociferously applauded throughout the evening. His best effort was the first song, "Call forth thy powers," which, although not one of Handel's divinest inspirations, is admirably calculated to seduce the singer to obey the injunction given forth in the title."

I may here observe, what is perhaps not generally known, or by those who once did know it has been forgotten, that at one of the

London Wednesday Concerts given by Mr. Stammers, I sang a duet with Braham. "Gallop on gaily" was the piece selected for the occasion, which was interesting, as exhibiting the great tenor of the past side by side with one whom his friends had already proclaimed the tenor of the future. Out of respect for Braham, I made no endeavour to outshine him by the display of those qualities of voice which, as a young man, I naturally possessed. The room was full of venerable amateurs, and many of them seemed well satisfied at the idea of their man, whom they had applauded at a hundred triumphs, eclipsing the young upstart of a later age. At last I heard some one near me in the orchestra whisper to a neighbour, "The old one has the best of it." This, I confess, aroused me. I had no wish to humiliate; but I certainly did not desire to be beaten. I exerted all my powers; and this outburst was followed by universal applause. I am happy to say that the first who congratulated me in private was Braham himself.

Incledon, who had a purer voice and more sustained style than Braham, said of the great tenor when he sang with him "Gallop on gaily" (the duet which, at a later period, I sang with Braham at Exeter Hall), that he was too florid and had too many runs. "There is no catching him," he added; "he hops about lik a tom-tit in a gooseberry bush."

This suggests to me a remark made by Braham himself on the singing of Sapio, a vocalist who had a voice something like that of Monsieur Chollet,—a baritone in the chest voice with the head notes of a tenor, and between these two different registers a sort of blank.

Asked what he thought of the new vocalist who was singing at the Haymarket Theatre, he said, "Well, he sings very high, he sings very low,—and he sings very middling."

Another singer I used often to hear as a lad was Templeton, who was a good vocalist, but awkward and without expression as an actor. Such histrionic power as he managed at times to display was due entirely to the teaching and personal influence of that great dramatic vocalist, Malibran. Occasionally she received valuable assistance from the stage manager, a one-legged man, who, though unfitted by his accident for heroic impersonations, had a certain courtly bearing which was quite wanting in Templeton. Once, when Malibran had in vain attempted to make the awkward tenor execute a graceful bow, the stage manager stumped with his wooden leg across the boards, stood before Templeton, and, with mingled dignity and grace, made the obeisance just as Malibran had desired it should be made.

"What a pity, Tempy," said the lively *prima donna,* "that you haven't a wooden leg!"

In connection with my first appearance in oratorio, I may be allowed to republish an article which appeared at the time in the *Morning Post* on my singing in sacred and in operatic music.

"It is not too much to say," observed the writer, "that in the character of Edgar of Ravenswood he had positively electrified the town, crowds actually being melted into tears night after night by his exquisitely pathetic delivery of the slow movement of Edgar's plaintive air, which may be said to form the *finale* of *Lucia.* It was held that a calmer, and what was thought to be a more scholastic, style would be better adapted to the rendering of Handel's masterpiece; and Mr. Reeves had to struggle at first against a certain amount of prejudice on the part of the hearers, and also, it must be added, against an imperfect and partially mistaken Handelian tradition. Every one knows that the great master, whom we look upon as half an Englishman, yielded so far homage to the taste of his age that he indulged in frequent rolling passages, which used to be commonly regarded as mere ornaments and *fioriture* extraneous to the general bearing of the piece. On the contrary, Mr. Reeves, endowed in a very high degree with the gift of spontaneous sympathy, which is the first essential for the great artist, felt instinctively that the passion of the song,—joy, sorrow, anger, patriotic spirit, be it what it might,—must be breathed through every measure of the strain, not artificially and obtrusively, as is sometimes done by his imitators, but by the magic of that artistic inspiration which our French neighbours call *le feu sacré*. Curious it was to see the vast number of admirers, rapt beyond themselves by the musician's spell, responding enthsiastically to tender exultation or fervent praise, and then doubting whether the spell had not been unlawful, and whispering to one another that this was not quite the true oratorio style after all. Of course, it has long been acknowledged that this was, and is the only oratorio style of singing worthy of the name."

When, in 1856, steps were taken towards establishing a Handel Festival, or at least towards giving one grand performance in commemoration of Handel's death, which took place, I need scarcely say, in 1759, it was resolved to begin by giving a preliminary Festival, by way of testing the resources of the Sacred Harmonic Society, which had taken the matter in hand, and of the various provincial societies which were to work in co-operation with it. I took part, as I shall, in the proper place, set forth, in the preliminary Handel Festival, in the Festival of 1859, and in all subsequent Handel Festivals until the year 1877, when, in consequence of a postive refusal on the part of Mr. (afterwards Sir Michael) Costa to lower his abnormally high pitch to the so-called "normal pitch" of the French and other continental nations, I refused any longer to sing.

I shall also have to tell, in some detail, how I created the tenor parts in Costa's oratorios of *Eli* and *Naaman*.

In the brief chapter, which I now conclude, my only object has been to give some account of my first appearance as an oratorio singer; as important an event, according to my view, as my first appearance in Italian opera, or, indeed, my first appearance as a singer of no matter what music.

# CHAPTER VI.

## CHAPTER VI.

ONE of my most successful parts in Italy had been that of Carlo in *Linda di Chamouni;* and in this part, as in others, I appeared at Her Majesty's Theatre under Mr. Lumley's direction in the year 1849. *Linda,* one of Donizetti's latest, is also one of his most characteristic operas. There is a Swiss atmosphere about it, and the little part of Pierotto is full of charm. Linda has at least one brilliant air to sing, the well known "*O luce di quest' anima;*" and her love-duet with Carlo, which has such a dramatic effect when it is repeated towards the end of the opera as Linda returns to reason, is one of Donizetti's happiest inspirations. As Carlo, to judge from the applause of crowded audiences, and from the warm eulogiums published in the newspapers, I made a very favourable impression; though the tenor part in *Linda* is far from being one of the greatest in Italian opera.

I had been cast for the part of Edgardo, with Jenny Lind as Lucia,—but I was told by someone in authority that my success had been too great in *Linda*, and it was thought I might make too much success in *Lucia* with Mr. Lumley's star. I went to the theatre for rehearsal, having received my call the previous night. When I arrived I found Gardoni had been given the part,—quite unsuited to his means. I consulted with my friends, and the next day threw up my engagement. Some good-natured people put it down to caprice; but my retirement was caused by an insult and a breach of faith on the part of Mr. Lumley.

In those days the rivalry between Her Majesty's Theatre and the Royal Italian Opera was very keen, and most singers of eminence found themselves pursued by offers from both the contending managers; at one house Mr. Benjamin Lumley, at the other Mr. Frederick Gye.

In 1849 I sang for the first time at Mr. Gye's establishment, making my *début* as Elvino in *La Sonnambula*, the part of Amina being undertaken by Madame Persiani, one of the most brilliant light sopranos of the time.

In a pamphlet not generally known on the subject of "Bellini and the opera of *La Sonnambula*," its author, Dr. T. L. Phipson, calls attention to the merits of Romani's well-constructed libretto, and of the expressive poetry which it presents at every page. The ingenious and pathetic story of *La Sonnambula* is known to have been invented by that admirable dramatist, Eugène Scribe. But Romani had to put Scribe's interesting little drama into operatic form, and, above all, he had to write the songs; and I agree with Dr. Phipson that in *La Sonnambula* "the words and the music are so intimately blended, so extremely suitable the one to the other, even in the most unimportant passages, that it is quite impossible to translate this opera into any other language without depriving both words and music of a considerable portion of their charm."

Happily, I had to sing the *Sonnambula* music in its native Italian; and I may without vanity say that I aroused the audience to enthusiasm in the great tenor air, "*Tutto e sciolto,*" with its impassioned sequel, "*Ah perchè non possò odiarti.*" What a difference between the Italian words of Elvino's burst of despair and the words of the miserable English translation. In the Italian each word fits each syllable, and the accented high note falls upon the third syllable of "*odiárti.*" Here there is a true climax; and the correspondence between words and music is perfect. In the English translation, on the other hand, Elvino's highest not of despair falls on the first syllable of the word "stealing."

In the Italian, music is "wedded to immortal verse;" in the English, it is tied to worthless doggerel.

A tenor, singing in English, "Still so gently all my senses stealing," can never produce the effect of a tenor singing in Italian, "*Ah perchè non possò odiarti.*" It is not my business to translate Italian libretti. But the opening of Elvino's famous song ought to have been rendered, "Tell me, traitress, why I cannot hate thee?" or at least by some line in which "*Perchè non possò odiarte*" would have been replaced by " Why I cannot *hate* thee."

The French translation of "*Ah perchè*," &c., is, as Dr. Phipson points out, scarcely better than the English; though in "*Que ne puis-je de mon âme*" the singer has the advantage of an open A for his high chest note. Let me here tell the reader, who is possibly without information on the subject, that Elvino's air is now generally sung one-third lower than it was originally written. In Bellini's manuscript, as preserved in Messrs. Ricordi's most valuable collection of manuscripts at their great Milan establishment, Elvino's air is written in the key of E flat. Consequently the passionate note, which falls upon the third syllable in "*odiarti*," was originally sung (by Rubini) on C; the highest note in the air being E flat, which, it is needless to say, no genuine tenor could possibly deliver with the chest voice.

For some time past, since the general decline in operatic tenors, Elvino has ceased to be a part of primary importance. This is a true absurdity: for Elvino has as important a part in the opera, and sings as important music, as Amina herself. Everything, however, is now sacrificed to the *prima donna*, and tenors of inferior capacity do not, I suppose, care to enter into competition with that lady. Elvino, under these circumstances, has shared the fate of Edgardo. Many tenors could not sing Elvino's music. Others who could get through it more or less well seemed to be afraid of entering into competition with a too brilliant Amina; who, it must be admitted, has the advantage of a singularly beautiful scene entirely her own.

I knew the *Lucia* as a work before going to Italy, and had heard Rubini sing the part of Edgardo at Her Majesty's Theatre. Rubini had an extraordinary tenor voice of the finest quality, but his high notes, extending to E flat and even F, were quite beyond the tenor register. He struck the high F in the tenor part of the *finale* to *I Puritani*. Bellini is known to have composed this opera, as well as *La Sonnambula*, with Rubini by his side; and often Rubini sang his part as Bellini wrote it. In the final piece he had written the note

D flat in the tenor part, and Rubini, looking over his shoulder misread it, singing F natural instead.

"If you can sing it, you shall have it," said Bellini; and he at once altered the passage so as to give Rubini his exceptionally high note, which at the first performance is said to have had a thrilling effect.

Rubini was no actor. But he was a truly dramatic singer, the dramatic effect being produced by the tone, the accent, the intense feeling with which he sang. Duprez, on the other hand, produced his dramatic effects by purely histrionic means, though it must be admitted that he was in every sense of the word a fine dramatic singer.

Independently of the beauty of the music, the part of Edgardo interested me so much by its romantic character that before going to Italy I studied it, not only with care but with enthusiasm, and in the midst of the most appropriate surroundings. Thus I meditated over the final scene, that of the cemetery, in the precincts of Muckress Abbey, so picturesque and so impressive.

I had gone on an operatic tour through Ireland with Mr. and Mrs. Alban Croft, both very good singers; and from Cork we were invited by Mr. Cronin of Killarney Park to give a concert at Killarney. I received, moreover, from Mr. Cronin an invitation to stay with him at the Park, and much enjoyed his fortnight's hospitality. It was during this visit that I made the acquaintance of the abbey which so much impressed me, and beneath whose shadow, as before stated, I imagined, studied, and thought out the part of Edgardo.

During my stay at Killarney Park we ascended all the neighbouring heights, and one day we made a special ascent of Mangerton mountain on ponies in order to hear the echoes which are awakened on all sides. I remember that when we were on the summit we saw beneath us a cloud from which rain was falling fast, we in the higher atmosphere being free from any such inconvenience.

With how many Lucias have I played the part of Edgardo; all good, and some excellent, as vocalists; many charming both as actresses and singers; but only one perfect!

My Lucia at the Royal Italian Opera was the famous Persiani, who had wonderful execution, but habitually sang sharp, so that it was quite painful to take part with her in concerted music.

Frezzolini, with whom I sang at Her Majesty's Theatre, was a finished artist; but she had already seen her best days, and her voice was sadly worn. She continued, however, to sing for some time afterwards, and undertook the part of Leonora in *Il Trovatore* when that work was produced for the first time at the Théâtre des Italiens under Verdi's personal direction in 1855.

Jenny Lind, but for one fault,—in the shape of an unwarrantable liberty taken with the composer's design,—would have been an ideal Lucia. Although I was once cast for the part of Edgardo to her Lucia, I, for reasons already mentioned, did not appear. Had I done so I should have felt bound to object to a highly novel incident which she thought fit to introduce. At the end of the magnificent *finale* to the second act, the finest piece of dramatic music that Donizetti ever wrote, Lucia appeals to the indignant Edgardo, who throws her back into her brother's arms ; upon which the curtain falls. Jenny Lind, however, as if to concentrate all attention on herself, rushed to the front of the stage, indicated by her gestures and general demeanour that she was losing her reason, and remained, as if demented, before the footlights, while the curtain fell behind her.

When, soon after Jenny Lind's great success, I was playing the part of Edgardo at Her Majesty's Theatre, Madame Frezzolini wished to make the quite illegitimate point which had gained for Jenny Lind most unmerited applause. But I guessed her intention, and checked her by quite legitimate means. As she was appealing to the lover she had betrayed, previously to letting her hair down and going through all the stage process of losing her reason, I seized her by the wrist and held her as in a vice. She struggled, and as she did so the public applauded the agitated scene, which seemed perfectly natural. I looked to the wing, gave the man in charge of the curtain a signal to let it down, and, as it began to fall, threw Lucia, still of sound mind, into the arms of the infamous Ashton.

Another mistake is constantly committed in the representation of *Lucia.* I say nothing about the omission of the vigorous challenge duet for Edgardo and Ashton at the beginning of the third act, which I always sang in Italy, and which is probably omitted in England as too fatiguing for the tenor, who, as a rule, finds it necessary to reserve himself for the great final scene. What strikes me as so inartistic in the present customary division of the opera is the dropping of the curtain after Lucia's great scene, the so-called "mad scene," followed immediately by Edgardo's final scene. No argument is possible on this point, the one rule in such a case being that the work must be played according to the composer's own intention. *Lucia* is an opera in three acts; but in order to give greater prominence to the *prima donna,* the curtain is made to fall after her principal scene, to the great detriment of the work as a whole. If the *prima donna* be a star of the first magnitude, the public, knowing that she will not appear again, and not caring to sit out the third long entr'acte, go home; and Edgardo is left to sing to empty benches a most dramatic scene, which should be regarded as a scene, and ought not to be treated as a separate act. The opera is unnecessarily, unjustifiably, prolonged; and the effect of the scene which the composer meant to follow without interval or pause, the scene of *Lucia's* madness, is greatly injured.

When I was playing the part of Edgardo at the Royal Italian Opera, I was obliged, after overcoming my difficulty with the self-willed Lucia in the scene of the contract, to state plainly to the manager, towards the close of the mad scene, that if he lowered the curtain I would not sing the final scene at all. He knew that I should keep my word, and the opera was played as the composer intended it to be played.

Never could I dream of introducing into my part anything that it did not originally contain; and I have the strongest objection to mutilations and wanton changes, by whomsoever made.

I have not yet spoken of the Lucia who

was the best of the many with whom it has been my good and ill fortune to play. Very interesting, fragile, but graceful, and essentially ladylike, Catherine Hayes was a finished vocalist, and sang the music of the part throughout most perfectly. She was, in fact, the *beau ideal* of Lucia. With her I really felt myself Edgar of Ravenswood and her Lucy Ashton. She was a charming woman in every sense; extremely good to her family, and especially affectionate towards her mother,—a very pretty Irishwoman with a musical voice and a delightful brogue.

I shall never forget Mrs. Hayes's introduction to my old friend Hogarth, musical critic of the *Daily News*. She seated herself by his side somewhat nervously, and with quite a reverential air; and, as soon as she felt able to speak, said to him:

"Oh, Mr. Hogarth, I am indeed proud to make the acquaintance of so great an artist. I am longing to see the lovely pictures you have painted. Would you some day be kind enough to show them to me?"

Hogarth's puzzled face was quite a study.

Fortunately, some one came up at that moment, and, changing the subject of conversation, saved the poor lady from the distress she would have experienced on discovering her innocent blunder.

I say again that I have sung with many Lucias in my time, but Catherine Hayes was the sweetest of them all.

Barbieri-Nini, whom I have not yet mentioned, was just the reverse. She was old and ugly; her figure was coarse; her acting and general demeanour not only unpoetical, but positively rough. Yet she was an excellent vocalist.

# CHAPTER VII.

## CHAPTER VII.

CATHERINE HAYES, always received with the greatest applause in England, used, in her native Ireland, to be applauded with the wildest enthusiasm. The London public admired her without troubling itself as to her origin. But when she sang at the Dublin Theatre, her Irish descent was always borne in mind; and a disposition was shown to do battle for her when nothing like fighting was required.

When she was at the height of her reputation, Thackeray, publishing some reflections on the subject of popularity, or rather notoriety, spoke of the unhealthy interest taken by the public in such persons as "Greenacre and Catherine Hayes." Without pausing to consider whether Thackeray could possibly have meant to couple a charming vocalist with an atrocious murderer, the Irish press attacked him in the most savage manner for his supposed brutality towards a vocalist who, among many other merits, possessed, in the eyes of Irish critics, the supreme one of being an Irishwoman. It seems strange that Thackeray, who, besides being a man of the world, was not only a great novelist, but also a practised journalist, an occasional contributor to the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*, and a regular contributor to *Punch*, who might be presumed, therefore, to know what was going on in London at the opera and elsewhere,—it seems strange that Thackeray should never have heard of Catherine Hayes, the accomplished *prima donna*, but only of a former Catherine Hayes, who committed some peculiarly horrible murder.

I assisted in the, to me, unusual character of spectator at Catherine Hayes's first appearance before a Dublin audience. It was at the old Theatre Royal, where I had just concluded a most successful engagement. I was bound for the south, and, having sent my luggage on, I dined, and afterwards went with a few friends to hear the opera. *Lucia* was the work to be performed, Catherine Hayes being, of course, cast for the *prima donna* part, which she had played with remarkable success in Italy. The house was crowded in every part. The representative of Edgardo was a Signor Paglieri, who did not seem to be a favourite. A portion of the audience,—that lively section which usually occupies the gallery,—affected to regard the Italian *primo tenore* as a fellow-Irishman. But though they addressed him as "Leary," and better still, as "Paddy Leary," they were evidently not proud of their compatriot.

"Is that Mr. Leary singing, or is it the gaas iscapin'?" was asked at one moment; while at another the vocalist was suggestively informed that the coach would leave Dublin in half an hour.

At last the unfortunate vocalist was seriously hissed. With such an Edgardo the new Lucia would have no chance; and the manager determined immediately to replace Signor Paglieri by a tenor named Damcke who happened to be at hand, an announcement being made to that effect.

The mere announcement of Damcke's name was enough to tickle the humour of the Irish audience, already in a mood for laughter. The last syllable of the singer's name suggested jokes on the word " key," while the name as a a whole called to mind, especially when the vocalist began to sing, its resemblance to " donkey." Such remarks as, " You haven't got the kay, Mr. Donkey ;" " It's down in your boots, Mr. Donkey," soon resounded from all parts of the house ; and it became evident that the second Edgardo, like the first, would have to resign his part.

I was at the time at the back of my box with Miss Lucombe, soon to become my wife, and Mr. Whitworth, the baritone. A keen-sighted amateur had detected my presence, and it was soon known throughout the theatre that I was among the audience. The rest may be told in the words of the Dublin correspondent of the *Times*.

" There were loud cries of 'Reeves! Reeves!' and a general wish manifested that he should fill the character sustained by him with such *éclat* during his engagement.

"Mr. Calcraft came forward, and said that he found the audience were not satisfied with the singing of the gentleman who had appeared before them—(cries of 'Reeves!')—and it was only justice to the gentleman to state that he had undertaken the character very unexpectedly, and at very short notice. However, Herr Damcke, who had also been engaged, would be prepared to appear in the other acts, and the opera would be resumed as soon as it would be possible.

"There were here loud and repeated cheers and calls for 'Reeves!'

"Mr. Calcraft, when the storm had partly subsided, said that he had no control over Mr. Reeves; the engagement with him had terminated, and he was there that evening as a private gentleman.

"The excitement here became very great; and Mr. Calcraft then added that Mr. Reeves, although asked, had declined to sing upon this sudden emergency—(cheers and renewed confusion).

"Mr. Reeves, addressing the house from the private box, said he though it but right to defend himself from the observations which had just been made by the manager.

"These few words added to the excitement already prevailing, and continued cheering followed.

"Mr. Calcraft, who made several attempts to be heard, again mentioned that he had no control over Mr. Reeves, whose engagement had terminated—('Hear,' and confusion).

"Mr. Reeves then said, with emphasis, that if the public desired it he would sing for them; but certainly not to oblige Mr. Calcraft.

"Mr. Calcraft then observed that Mr. Reeves might decline to sing to oblige him; but he was glad to find that he consented to sing, particularly as it was to support their gifted and talented young countrywoman—(cheers).

"If the theatre presented a novel appearance during these proceedings, the public fervour seemed to increase with each new incident; and, Mr. Calcraft having retired from the stage, Mr. Reeves descended from his box in order to dress for the part thus suddenly assumed, Several minor incidents occurred, one being the substitution of Mr. Lavenu for Mr. Benedict as conductor.

"When the curtain rose, Miss Hayes and Mr. Reeves appeared to go through again a portion of the first act; and for the want of a previous rehearsal there was a momentary hesitation, but this ceased as quickly; and the opera, so far as relates to the leading parts, was rendered with great success. The incidents, however, connected with the *début* of the *prima donna* were so peculiar and annoying, and so calculated to discompose even the most self-possessed person, that we do not mean to give any detailed notice of the opera or of the singing of Miss Hayes. It was manifest that until the last act she had not become altogether reassurred; but the maniac song she rendered with a charming expression and finish, and the clear, ringing soprano notes, in the highest register of her voice, told with fine effect. She was called for at the close of each act, as was also Mr. Reeves. The latter, in that which ought to be one of his most favourite characters, fully sustained his deserved reputation.

"After the opera, Mr. Calcraft came forward, and for a short time could not obtain a hearing. When silence was restored he commenced by saying that he thought no misconception should go abroad in reference to the words of Mr. Reeves, that he should sing to oblige the public, but not to oblige the manager. It might be conceived from this expression that there was some secret difference,—some subject matter of complaint which had not been explained.

"Mr. Reeves, at this juncture, and dressed in stage costume, came forward and took his place near Mr. Calcraft, regarding him very fixedly as he addressed the audience.

"Mr. Calcraft proceeded to observe that to remove any erroneous opinions that might go abroad, it was necessary to state that he had fulfilled his engagement with Mr. Reeves, and that he had paid him what had been stipulated.

"There had been delays in the production of an opera,—delays for which neither he nor Mr. Reeves were answerable, although the result had been to take money from the pocket of the manager. So far from any unkindly feeling existing, he had engaged with Mr. Sims Reeves to sing, after his return from provincial engagements, the week before Christmas; and he was therefore much surprised to find that gentleman so emphatically declaring that he would be quite willing to oblige the audience, but certainly not to oblige the manager.

"A voice from the gallery, 'Make it up, both of you.'—(cheers and laughter.)

"Mr. Reeves observed that he had nothing to make up; but, as a matter of justice to himself, it was right that the public should be fully apprised of what had occurred. He had come to the theatre that evening as a private individual, and when the curtain fell and the performance had abruptly stopped, he was asked by a gentleman who was concerned in the management of the present engagement, together with Mr. Calcraft, to sing in the opera—('Hear'). He stated in reply that the call was quite unexpected and that he had just come from dinner, and that he had no dress ready; and upon declining to appear, the person who had waited on him said that he considered his conduct was ungentlemanlike. This, of course, incensed him; and when Mr. Calcraft afterwards spoke to him, his manner seemed much excited and not calculated to remove the impression already made.

"Mr. Calcraft here interposed, and, addressing the conductor, observed that Mr. Lavenu was present on the occasion, and he appealed to him to say if his manner was excited.

"The conductor, more skilled in chords than discords, although called for by the house, did not respond to the appeal.

"Mr. Calcraft added that he felt happy at the opera having terminated, and was obliged to Mr. Reeves for singing in it; and he bore no animosity to that gentleman for what had occurred. Mr. Calcraft then extended his hand to Mr. Reeves, which the other took; and there were repeated cheers at the termination of what at one time seemed a very decided difference.

"Some private conversation then took place between these persons, after which Mr. Reeves bowed and retired."

# CHAPTER VIII.

## CHAPTER VIII.

SOME day, it may be hoped, we shall have a permanent establishment for the performance of original English operas and foreign operas translated into English. Meanwhile, performances in English of native and foreign operas take place from time to time; and in the winter of 1849 I was once more engaged to appear at an English opera house. The enterprise did not, however, last very long; and I accepted, for the second time, an engagement for the summer season of 1850 at Her Majesty's Theatre, where *Ernani* was given for my first appearance.

I must leave others to speak of the effect of my performances; and on this occasion, according to the *Musical World*, "the reception afforded to Mr. Sims Reeves was enthusiastic. Hands clapped," continued this journal, "hats and handkerchiefs waved, and throats vociferated. Every species of active demonstration was evinced in favour of 'our great dramatic tenor,' who continued bowing his acknowledgments for several minutes. Nothing could be more unanimously boisterous; nor could anything more plainly exhibit the position in which Mr. Sims Reeves stands before the London public. . . . . Mr. Sims Reeves was in great voice, and sang with unusual energy and dramatic feeling. His first *cavatina*, '*Come, rugiada al cespite*,' was rendered with intense expression, and brought down the loudest applause. The delicacy and purity of his singing in the duet '*Ah! morir potessi adesso*' (with Elvira) evoked an unanimous *encore*, maugre the absence of all kind of merit in the composition. In the two 'grand' *finales* to the first and second acts, Mr. Sims Reeves displayed all that breadth of style, power of voice, and manly vigour for which he has been celebrated. The audience, pleased beyond measure, applauded to the echo, and recalled the singer vociferously. The greatest hit, however, during the performance was in the last scene, where the composer had given a sentimental passage, *à la Bellini*, to the tenor, followed by an important and noisy trio, the whole concluding with an elaborate death scene. Mr. Sims Reeves acted and sang with decided power in this scene, thus finishing a very excellent performance with a climax which set the seal upon it, and confirmed the singer's triumph beyond all doubt. . . . . At the fall of the curtain Madame Parodi, Signor Beletti, and Mr. Sims Reeves came forward twice. A call then being raised for 'Reeves!' that gentleman appeared alone, and was cheered for several seconds."

In February, 1851, I once more visited Dublin, where I was engaged to sing with Madame Grisi. But she was suddenly taken ill; and being declared by the necessary medical certificate to be "totally unable to fulfil any professional engagement," it was essential to secure another *prima donna* forthwith. Fortunately, my wife was with me; and we now took part together in a series of operatic representations. She played successively the part of Lucia to my Edgardo, of Amina to my Elvino, of Elvira (in *I Puritani*) to my Arturo, and of Elvira to my Ernani. I played, moreover, the part of Captain Macheath in the *Beggar's Opera.* In this work my wife did not appear.

# Chapter IX.

## CHAPTER IX.

MR. LUMLEY was at this time, like Merelli when I was singing in Italy, and, at an earlier period, like Barbaja, the manager of more than one Italian opera house. Barbaja directed at the same time the San Carlo of Naples, the Scala of Milan, and an Italian opera house which he had himself established at Vienna. Merelli conducted simultaneously the Italian opera at Vienna and a number of opera houses in various parts of Italy. Mr. Lumley was the lessee of only two Italian opera houses: Her Majesty's Theatre in London, and the Théâtre des Italiens in Paris. He had engaged me for both his enterprises; and on my arrival at the French capital, I was introduced to my new public at a concert, where I made a very favourable impression. The next morning I received a letter from Mr. Lumley, in which he wrote, "You will have a great success in *Ernani*. I was delighted to find the real hold you had obtained over the Parisians by your singing at the last concert."

In *Ernani*, the opera chosen for my *début*, a *prima donna*, destined for a brilliant though brief career, made her first appearance before a Paris public in the character of Elvira. "Her *début*," wrote the Paris correspondent of one of the London musical journals, "as Donna Sol in the *ranting* opera of *Ernani* was triumphant" [the genius of Verdi, it may be admitted, was not yet mature]. "Mr. Sims Reeves played Ernani; Colini, Carlo V.; and Scapini, Silva. The English tenor was in splendid voice, and rose higher than ever in the opinion of the *abonnés*."

Among other parts sung by me at the Théâtre des Italiens during this engagement were those of Gennaro in *Lucrezia Borgia*, and Carlo in *Linda di Chamouni*. According to one of the Paris correspondents, who described the *Linda* performance, the house at times "literally rang with applause." The part of Linda was taken by the famous Sontag, who, after making a seemingly brilliant marriage, and retiring from the stage, had been obliged by circumstances to return to it; and the correspondent just referred to declared that "in the duet with Madame Sontag, Reeves was cheered enthusiastically."

I had sung the part of Carlo again and again, both in Italy and in England. To Madame Sontag, however, the part of Linda was wholly new, the opera having been composed by Donizetti in 1843, at a time when Madame Sontag had ceased to be known by that name, and, as Countess Rossi, lived with her husband, then Piedmontese minister at St. Petersburg. Her departure from the stage had caused great excitement at Paris, where she was perhaps a greater favourite than even in London; and the event had been made by Scribe and Auber the subject of an opera, well known to all lovers of Auber's music as *L'Ambassadrice.*

In *L'Ambassadrice,* the adored *prima donna* finds so many obstacles thrown in the way of her marriage with the ambassador, to whom she has already plighted her faith, that at the last moment she tears up her marriage-contract, and, in a burst of genuine artistic feeling, declares that she will return to her first love,—the lyrical stage.

This is precisely what the charming Henrietta Sontag did not do. She married Count Rossi, keeping the marriage a secret for a year or two that she might continue to appear at theatres and concerts, and thus increase, in no inconsiderable degree, her husband's by no means boundless wealth.

Nor was Count Rossi an ambassador. He was only a minister; and it was in consequence of the Italian Government's finding it necessary, after the disaster of Novara, in 1848, to replace her ministers everywhere by *chargés d'affaires* at much lower salaries, that the Countess Rossi determined to return to the scenes of her former triumphs. Negotiations towards this end were carried on with Mr. Lumley by the Earl of Westmoreland, then ambassador at the court of Berlin,—the Lord Burghersh of former days,—who had so kindly assisted me to get away from my unprofitable, and indeed costly, engagement at Vienna.

My performances at Paris were attended with the most complete success. Yet here, as in London, I found myself constantly exposed to the jealousy of the Italians; not necessarily tenors, but for the most part friends and partizans of tenors. Tamburini, for instance, did his best to undervalue me in the interest of his son-in-law, Gardoni; while Lablache seemed to hold, on general principles, that though Italians were quite in place on the boards of a London theatre, an Englishman was quite out of place if he presumed to accept a leading position among them. Rubini and Mario, as I have said before, and as I take pleasure in repeating, were always my very good friends. Rubini I lost sight of after leaving Italy. But Mario and myself were always, from the beginning of my career until the end of his, on most amicable terms. He was a gentleman, in the fullest sense of the word, and, as such, was incapable of meanness or of any sort of pettiness.

# CHAPTER X.

## CHAPTER X.

THIS may be a fit place in which to introduce some observations for the guidance of those whose intention it is to study the art of singing.

If there are charms in music, all reasonable people must admit that they are possessed in a far higher degree by the well-trained voice than by any instrument however perfectly played. Nature has so willed it, for the voice is Nature's own instrument; and Art has here given Nature the most powerful aid, since, through Art, the voice may be made to produce sounds with greater nicety and exactness than any instrument. The charm of the human voice, even in speaking, is very powerful; and every one knows that in oratory a just modulation of it is of the highest importance. Every lover of music, therefore, must wish to see the voice brought to the greatest possible perfection,—a result which is certainly not aided by the present mode of shouting, so frequently and so erroneously described as "splendid declamation." Preposterous idea! For this straining of the voice not only destroys its beauty at the moment, but in the long run ruins it altogether.

As to the obstinacy, amounting almost to insanity, of those who maintain that the present monstrously high pitch is necessary by reason of the brilliancy which, with such a pitch, can be attained by our English, French, or Italian orchestras, all that need be said is that to sing to such a pitch must have the inevitable effect of forcing up the voice and putting upon it a strain which it cannot bear. Thus the quality of tone is impaired, and the worst fault of all, singing out of tune, follows as a natural consequence.

For the faults of all singers, supposing them to have begun with a fair allowance of natural gifts, I hold the teacher to be altogether responsible. When a defect declares itself, it should be at once corrected. If the student has a bad mode of delivery, or no matter what fault, the teacher should at once remedy it, and, failing to do so, he renders himself answerable for the errors of his pupil. From the first to the last, the master should never forget that what he fails to correct he thereby sanctions.

The pupil must, in the first place, gain a good knowledge of his notes, the value of time, &c. Then let the master do his utmost to make him hit and sound the notes perfectly in tune. A professor who has not a good ear should not undertake to instruct; as a vocalist who has not got a good ear should not attempt to sing. A singer who cannot sing in tune had better give up studying at once, for anything else he may learn will be of no real use to him.

To gain the high notes, a singer should be taught to ascend the scale by slow degrees, taking care to swell each note from the softest *piano* to the loudest *forte*, and from the loudest *forte* to the softest *piano*. By this progressive exercise he should be able to acquire a good *messa di voce;* and a good *messa di voce* never fails to have an exquisite effect.

Locke illustrates the necessity of gaining strength slowly and progressively by the story of the famous athlete, Milo of Cretona; who began by carrying a calf, and gradually increased his burden until at last he was able to carry a cow. If, says Locke, he had begun by carrying a cow, he would soon have been unable even to carry a calf.

In extending the compass of the voice, the student must bear in mind that the higher the notes the more necessary it will be to touch them with softness in order to avoid screaming. He must be careful too, and ever on the watch, to avoid singing through the nose or in a choked manner in the throat. There are, I am sorry to say, many throaty tenors now on the platform, and there are numbers of people who blindly applaud them. The faults of the singer are not, however, justified by the ignorance of his admirers.

The pupil should always sing to the French pitch, the so-called *diapason normal,* in order that he may acquire and preserve high notes. How painful it is to watch some of the singers of the present day as they strive to reach the high notes, often with contortions ludicrous to behold!

The most perfect singer I ever heard, of whom in a future chapter I shall have much to say, was Jenny Lind; and this lady, as natural and frank as she was kind-hearted, was as particular about singing with propriety of demeanour as about singing absolutely in tune and with the exact expression required by the meaning of the words. On one occasion she quietly asked a vocalist who indulged in dreadful contortions why she made such faces.

“I cannot reach the notes without doing so,” was the reply.

“ “Then,” said Jenny Lind, in her gentlest manner, “you should not sing at all.”

Let the master never be tired of making the scholar sol-fa so long as he finds it necessary; for if he should permit him to sing upon the vowels too soon he will commit a grave error. Let the student sing on the three open vowels, more especially on the first, but not always on the same; from this constant exercise he will learn not to confound one with the other, and will arrive more easily at a correct enunciation of words.

Singing demands such strict application that one must study with the mind as well as with the voice. Early correction is everything. Let the student once acquire faults, and the older he grows the worse his faults will become. He should hear, as often as he can, the most celebrated singers as well as the best instrumental performers, and should remember that at the Conservatorio of Milan every instrumental performer, in order to acquire a song-like expression, is taught to sing.

Some young vocalists who are sent into the profession before their time, who have scarcely indeed finished their first most essential lessons, sing their vowels in a most abominable manner, with an affectation which suggests that they must be ashamed to open their mouths. Others, on the contrary, stretch their mouths over much.

Words must be uttered in such a manner that not a syllable is lost. If they are not distinctly enunciated the singer deprives the hearer of the greater part of such delight as vocal music can give.

Finally, I cannot impress too much on the student the absolute necessity of practising every day. Let him not imagine, even if he has attained a high position, that it will be sufficient for him to exercise his voice simply when he is called upon to do so in public. To show that I follow my own precepts, I may mention that since the beginning of my career until now (except when, from cold or some other form of illness, my voice has been out of order) I have made a point of practising every day.

By preference, the vocalist, whatever point of perfection he may have reached, should practice in presence of a master capable of at once noticing and correcting any fault, of whatever character, he may commit. The singer can never hear himself as an attentive and duly qualified professor can hear him. For years it was my custom to sing daily in presence of Signor Alary, composer of *Le Tre nozze*, and one of the best singing masters I ever knew.

As regards the health of the voice, it is necessary, of course, to avoid as much as possible all risk of taking a cold. But this is not to be done by remaining indoors, or by excessive wrapping when in the open air. I have always lived simply and regularly, and taken plenty of exercise. Besides walking every day, I frequently do my seven or eight miles along a country road two or three times a week.

It is insufficient to cultivate the voice unless general intelligence be also cultivated. I should recommend singers not to restrict themselves so much as most of us do to musical society, in which the conversation is sure, naturally enough, to turn for the most part on musical subjects. Analagous advice might be offered to painters, who are seldom to be met with among musicians, just as musicians are seldom to be met with among them.

Some of my pleasantest hours have been passed at the Garrick Club, where, I venture to say, there was better company to be found in my younger days than there is now. When I first joined it, Thackeray, Dickens, Talfourd, Charles Kemble, Charles Kean, Albert Smith. and Shirley Brooks, were constantly to be met with in the smoking room. I wish I had kept some of their letters. In its due place, however, I shall be able to reproduce, at least, one which I received from the genial and witty Shirley Brooks.

# CHAPTER XI

## CHAPTER XI.

OF the many eccentricities of the human mind, not the least strange is that by which it may so habitually associate the performance of a certain act with some external object that it at length cannot perform the one in the absence of the other. Between the act and the object there is perhaps no connection whatever, independently of habit. Thus Dr. Beattie mentions the case of a clergyman who could not compose his sermon unless he held a foot-rule in his hand (though, perhaps, the sermon was measured off into sections by this means); and of another clergyman who, while engaged in study, would incessantly roll between his fingers a packet of peas. Locke, too, refers to a young man who, in a particular room which contained an old trunk, could dance to perfection; but in another room, if it wanted such a piece of furniture, could not perform a single step. In the *Tatler*, again, we find an instance of an attorney who, in his legal arguments, would always be twisting about his finger a piece of thread, which the wags, of course, called the thread of his discourse. A client of his was once curious to see how he would manage without it, and stole it from him. The consequence was that the orator became suddenly silent in the midst of his speech, and the client expiated his joke by the loss of his action.

But while admitting the possibility of this phenomenon, the question yet remains as to whether the particular instances recorded in connection with it are always true. Mr. Mapleson, in his racy, entertaining *Memoirs*, recently astonished the world, and particularly myself, by the assertion that I could not sing unless I had previously swallowed, in a dressing-room hung with a particular kind of chintz, a basin of soup prepared at Birch's in Cornhill. Now, to take the assertion for one moment in earnest, the particular kind of chintz might have been everywhere at my disposal ; but how on earth, when singing, for instance, at the Theatre Royal, Dublin, or, still less, on my lengthened Italian tour, could I have obtained the requisite supply of soup, prepared at Birch's in Cornhill ?

Mr. Mapleson's assertion, however, is altogether too droll to require any serious denial on my part. The fact seems to be, that when a vocalist, from indisposition or other valid cause, is unable to sing, any fantastic explanation of his non-appearance obtains readier credence than the actual truth.

I may conscientiously say that I have never broken an appointment with the public from anything like caprice ; and while many journals have been pleased to attribute my occasional non-appearance to absolute whim, a few have had the justice to defend me from such suspicions as those to which every vocalist of any eminence has been at times exposed.

On the occasion of my playing Captain Macheath in the *Beggar's Opera*, "the house," wrote *Punch*, "was literally crammed from floor to ceiling by an audience whose enthusiastic temperature increased in a graduated thermometrical scale, the overboiling point being reached at the back row; and this on a night when in the boxes and stalls wrappers, fur mantles, and ulsters were *de rigueur*, on account of *de rigour* of the cold, and when the Messrs. Gatti might have made a considerable addition to their good fortune by sending round the attendants with a supply of foot-warmers, hot toddy and mulled claret, and other popular drinks, at cheap prices. There he was, bright and gay as ever, our *tenner* still unchanged, and equal to any number of the most valuable notes.

"*En passant*, the public has an idea that Mr. Sims Reeves is 'a bird who can sing,' and often capriciously 'won't sing.' Some even go so far as to ask, 'Can't he be made to sing?' No one wishes more sincerely than himself that on the occasion when he is forced to refuse, he *could* 'be made to sing.' It is no pleasure to any man to lose money by being compelled to cancel an engagement which is entered into on the play and pay principle; and it cannot but be an unspeakable, or in his case unsingable, disappointment to thousands who 'hang on his lips.' It is no more a pleasure for a distinguished tenor to be laid up with a bad throat than for a one-legged dancer, *à la* Donato, to be prostrated by the gout in his one solitary foot."

My well-known objection to encores has exposed me, moreover, to demonstrations which, though substantially complimentary, have also presented something of a reproachful character. Now, encores may be opposed on various grounds. In an opera they destroy the balance between the different scenes; and the effect of the singing, whether in an opera, an oratorio, a cantata, or a miscellaneous concert, is never so good the second as the first time. The encore system is particularly unfair, moreover, towards a singer who, far from sparing himself, throws his heart and soul into his work. The more he exerts himself, that is to say, to do his best, the more surely is he condemned to exert himself a second time with the effect, probably, of rendering himself unable to do justice in subsequent pieces.

Not only do I object to encores on my own account. I dislike them generally and on principle; and once I remember, at the very beginning of my career, I, in conjunction with another singer, took a very efficacious way of preventing a third vocalist,—Bedell by name,—from prolonging the performance by repeating a lengthy and tedious song which he had evidently resolved, on small provocation, to deliver a second time. I and my companion were playing, appropriately enough, the parts of conspirators, in which character we wore long loose cloaks. As Bedell was preparing to repeat his song,—"The Storm,"—we walked stealthily towards him from one of the wings with our cloaks hanging on our arms, threw the ample garments over his head, entangled him in their folds, and dragged him off the stage; when his involuntary exit was taken as a signal for the curtain to come down.

Our impromptu *coup de théâtre* took the audience by surprise, and we were rewarded for our happy thought by a loud spontaneous burst of applause.

So well was the affair managed that Bedell never found out who the two conspirators really were.

# CHAPTER XII.

## CHAPTER XII.

I HAD been singing six or seven years at the Sacred Harmonic Society, when Sir Michael Costa, who had hitherto distinguished himself only as a composer of ballet music and of opera (*Alma* was considered his best work in the former, and *Malek Adel* in the latter style), accepted a commission to write an oratorio for the Birmingham Festival of 1855. The subject was *Eli*, and the tenor part was to be written for me.

In composing his oratorio Sir Michael (then Mr.) Costa cannot be said to have been much helped by his librettist. The story is without connection, and the incidents, neither plentiful nor striking, are not of a kind to suggest musical illustration. There is of necessity, then, a want of unity in the work. There are two situations, however, which at once appeal to the musician; and these Costa turned to good account. The first is where Eli overhears his two sons, Hophni and Phineas, riotously singing to the women assembled at the door of the Tabernacle; the second where Saph, a valiant warrior of Gath, summons the Philistines to battle. There is nothing novel in the idea of a war song any more than in that of a drinking song, or a song about love. But a war song can and must be set to music; and Saph's inspiriting call to battle was treated by Costa with fine effect. It is written in the newspapers of the time that "the singing of Mr. Sims Reeves and the chorus induced the audience to overthrow the barriers of etiquette and take from the hands of the president the assumed right of encore. The solo and chorus of the Philistines, 'Hark the trumpet sounding,' carried everything before it; and the audience were quite unable to suppress their emotions. Mr. Sims Reeves gave the solo with electrical effect; the chorus answered in a voice of thunder, and the applause was such that, as before stated, the president was obliged to consent to a repetition."

I have elsewhere mentioned what I must here repeat, that among the audience, listening with critical attention, were three famous tenors,—Mario, Gardoni, and Tamberlik.

At the end of the oratorio the greatest of the three, in the presence of his artistic colleagues, complimented the successful composer.

"But you have insulted us!" he added jokingly.

"How?" inquired Costa.

"By giving the tenor part," replied Mario, "to an English singer. . . . But you were right after all," he continued, "for no Italian could have done justice to it."

Three years later Mr. Costa produced his second oratorio, *Naaman*, which, like *Eli*, was composed expressly for the Birmingham Festival. As in *Eli*, moreover, the tenor part was written specially for me. My associates in the work were Adelina Patti, Miss Palmer, an excellent contralto of that time, now forgotten, and Mr. Santley.

Patti made a brilliant success, and the composer could not but congratulate himself on having found such a representative for his Adah.

One of the best pieces in the oratorio was the quartett, "Honour and Glory," sung with the greatest effect by the four principal vocalists.

"Nothing more unanimous," wrote one of the critics present at the Festival, "nothing more spontaneous was ever witnessed, than the overwhelming demand for an instant repetition of this wonderfully striking and effective piece. It was, moreover, superbly executed. In the delivery of the opening phrase, alternately taken up by the other voices, Mr. Sims Reeves electrified his hearers; every note was an 'Armstrong'; then the youthful, sympathetic, and penetrating notes of Mdlle. Adelina Patti's exquisite soprano rang through the hall like sounds of a silver trumpet. In the bass part Mr. Santley was incomparable; while Miss Palmer, the contralto, by her correctness and intelligence showed how thoroughly she felt the honour of being in such company."

Adelina Patti sang on this occasion for the first time in oratorio, and there were no two opinions as to her success, which was, indeed, triumphant. To restrict myself, however, to my own share in the work, it is recorded, in the journals of the time, that "all the martial music which forms part of the paraphernalia attending the several appearances of Naaman, including the splendidly instrumental triumphal march with chorus in the first part, and a purely instrumental march, both original and characteristic, in the second, is as vigorous and spirited as could be wished. Naaman's last solo, 'Blessed be the Lord God,' a sort of prologue to the imposing final chorus, is a grand piece of musical declamation. It is doubtful whether any other tenor than Mr. Sims Reeves, who, in his reading, imparts almost as much dramatic significance as if he were surrounded by all the accessories and appointments of stage representation, could be found to make Naaman the striking character he makes him. Never has this artist been more completely master of his resources than at this festival; and never did he exert his rare powers with more assiduity and success than on behalf of Mr. Costa's new work. 'There is but one Reeves,' was the remark on all sides after his noble delivery of the first phrase in the inspiring quartett. . . . Mr. Costa had secured for his oratorio a cast of unprecedented strength. Besides the four artists already named, Madame Sainton Dolby was provided with a part which, if dramatically unimportant, contained two very beautiful airs, 'I sought the Lord,' and 'I dreamed I was in Heaven.'"

The performance was scarcely at an end when Costa paid me a visit, in order to thank me for what he afterwards called my invaluable aid. As I was not in, he left his card, on which he had written the words, "*In paradiso non si canta meglio.*"

For some time I was as closely identified with the war-song in *Eli* and with Naaman's Dream, the last solo, "Blessed be the Lord God," as with the recitative in *St. Paul*, "Men, Brothers, and Fathers, hearken to me," and the Handelian airs, "The enemy said" and "Sound an alarm."

Costa was in the habit of sending every year to Rossini a Stilton cheese in fine condition.

After the production of *Eli* he forwarded him the usual cheese accompanied by the score of his new work. What Rossini wrote in reply I do not know; but a friend of the great Italian composer, hearing of the presents he had received, asked him what he thought of Costa's oratorio.

"The cheese was excellent," he replied.

At a later date an oratorio which greatly interested me was Sir Arthur Sullivan's *Prodigal Son.* The work contains so much music of an elevated character that, thinking of it, one cannot but ask whether Sir Arthur, at least from the art point of view, would not have done well to write more oratorios and fewer operettas. Of serious opera it would be useless in this connection to speak; since, with all our boasted love of music, we are unable to keep going, except at long intervals, and then only for a few months at a time, a national English Opera house.

We have plenty of operetta theatres, and the reckless way in which they are conducted as regards the singers, makes me feel it my duty to enter a protest on the subject. Many of the composers, especially the most distinguished of them all, Sir Arthur Sullivan, write with a view to brilliancy of effect very trying passages for the sopranos and tenors; passages which involve a constant strain on the upper notes of the voice. This would not matter so much were not the same singers called upon to sing night after night. No opera manager expects a vocalist to appear more than three times a week; the manager, however, of an operetta theatre is insatiable, inexorable. His singers must sing for him every night, not at the risk but with the absolute certainty of ruining their voices. I will not mention names. Let any one who remembers the sopranos and tenors who during the last ten or twelve years have appeared in operetta recall some of the best, and ask himself what has become of them.

Operetta, trivial and unpretentious as it may seem, has, through the practice of giving the same work with the same cast night after night, destroyed more voices than Verdi, Meyerbeer, or even Wagner. I quite understand that it is to the advantage of a manager to play night after night the same operetta with the same singers until they are exhausted and done for. But on this point the interests of singers and managers are not identical.

A vocalist might sing three nights a week without injury to his voice, but the strain of six nights a week is absolutely sure to ruin it. All voices succumb, more or less rapidly, to this treadmill work, which serves merely to put money into the pockets of the composer, the librettist, and the manager. What do these gentlemen care if they destroy the voices of their victims? They will tell you there are plenty more vocalists to be found.

# CHAPTER XIII.

## CHAPTER XIII.

FROM the year 1845, when I made my first appearance in opera, at La Scala, Milan, until 1860, when I created the part of Robin Hood in Macfarren's opera of that name, I sang much more frequently on the stage than on the concert platform. Since 1860, I have sung but little in opera. But I continued to sing without intermission at the most important of our musical festivals and at the performances of the Sacred Harmonic Society.

My greatest achievements, however, in sacred music have been at the Crystal Palace, amidst the grandest surroundings by which the impressiveness of sacred music has ever been enhanced. Preparations for a grand centennial commemoration of Handel's death were begun as early as 1856, in view of 1859; it was in 1759, at the age of seventy-four, that the great composer died. I may here point out, what the student of musical history already knows, that Handel's sublime oratorios were all written during the last eighteen years of his life. Like the setting sun, he shed his richest, his most glowing rays, when he was about to disappear.

Beginning his creative work as a very young man, he occupied himself for thirty-six years with the composition of operas, not one of which—except here and there, by a single air—is now known. A very large number of his oratorios, on the other hand, survive as popular works, familiar to every one in England who cares for music.

The hundredth anniversary of Handel's birthday had been celebrated (some months before the proper time) at Westminster Abbey in 1784. When the hundredth anniversary of the great man's death was at hand, the Sacred Harmonic Society, under the direction of Robert Bowley, resolved, three years beforehand, to commemorate it with a solemnity worthy of the occasion. After much consideration, it was determined to give a preliminary series of performances in 1857; a sort of rehearsal of what should take place, possibly on a grander scale, in 1859.

In June, 1857, the preliminary Handel Festival was held at the Crystal Palace, and I sang the tenor music in each of the three oratorios performed — the *Messiah, Israel in Egypt,* and *Judas Maccabæus.* These three works were repeated under the same conditions, except that the chorus and orchestra were both increased, at the centennial festival in 1859; officially the first of the festivals given every three years until the present day, and destined, we may be sure, to be repeated so long as music shall be cared for in England.

At the historical festival of 1859, the solo singers were Madame Clara Novello, Miss Dolby, Mr. Weiss, Signor Beletti, and myself. The oratorio of the first day, the *Messiah,* was given with the greatest possible success. But it was on the second day, in *Judas,* that I made the deepest impression. The audience and orchestra, according to the *Musical World,* received Sims Reeves "with thunders of applause, the former, indeed, 'rising at him' as the pit at Drury Lane were wont to do at Kean. The selection from *Judas* comprised the chorus, 'Oh, Father, whose Almighty power;' the recitative and aria, 'Sound an alarm;' the chorus, 'We hear, we hear, the pleasing dreadful call;' the recitative and air, 'From mighty kings;' the duet and chorus, 'Oh, never, never bow we down;' and the trio and chorus, 'See the conquering hero comes.' Mr. Sims Reeves created an immense sensation in that most stirring of all martial airs, 'Sound an alarm,' and was encored in a hurricane of applause."

Great, however, as was my success on this occasion, I attained a crowning triumph on the third and concluding day. *Israel in Egypt* was the work performed, and in it I, according to the *Musical World*, "sang transcendently. He literally surpassed himself. His execution of 'The enemy said' was indeed, the great vocal feat of the festival. It even went beyond 'Sound an alarm,' in *Judas Maccabæus*."

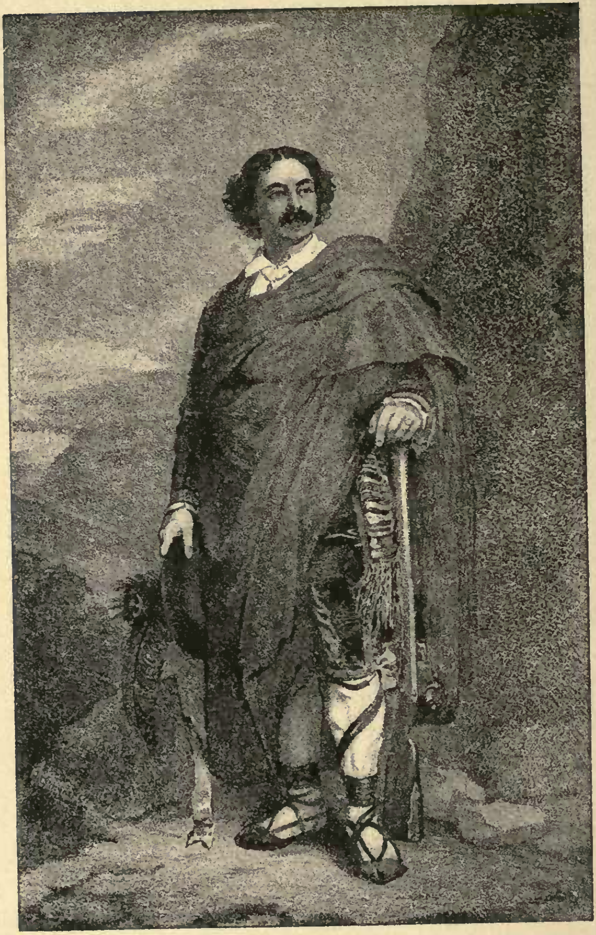
In June, 1859, I was doing a great deal of work; so much that I look back to it with a sort of retrospective alarm, wondering how it was that I got through it all without breaking down.

I had been singing, under Mr. Buckstone's management, at the Haymarket Theatre, where, among other works, a new opera, called *Bertha*, by Henry Smart, was produced, but without financial success. Auber's already well-known opera of *Fra Diavolo* was, on the other hand, received with constant applause. In the part of the hero, I made no small impression. Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Consort did us the honour to attend one of the performances; and Her Majesty seemed particularly pleased with my delivery of the serenade, "Young Agnes."

During the same month, I had been singing at the Handel Festival for an entire week; from the grand public rehearsal, that is to say, until the third day of the festival properly so-called; and I was engaged to sing on the evening of the third day at the Court concert, when suddenly, to my consternation, I learned that one of the pieces for which I was set down in the programme was the serenade in *Fra Diavolo*, which Her Gracious Majesty had heard me sing shortly before at the Haymarket Theatre. I should, in the course of the day, have to sing "The enemy said," in *Israel in Egypt*, and should in all probability have to sing it twice; and after an air so trying as this one, when sung as I was in the habit of singing it, with all the force, all the feeling at my command, it would be quite impossible for me to do justice to Auber's charming serenade, with the demands it makes on the delicate upper notes of the voice. The thing could not be done; and I was obliged, very reluctantly, but of absolute necessity, to decline. I suggested some other piece.

But my declination was not accepted, and I was given to understand that I must obey Her Majesty's command.

In the evening Costa saw Prince Albert, and represented to His Royal Highness that after singing all the week,—after singing that very day, in *Israel in Egypt*, and singing twice, as I had foreseen might be the case, the great, and, under the circumstances, really most exhausting



Sims Reeves as Fra Diavolo

air, "The enemy said," it was impossible for me to render justice to the delicate, yet exacting music of Auber's *Serenade.* After every effort there is necessarily a reaction; and I had used my upper notes with so much vigour in the oratorio that I no longer possessed that full command over them which would be indispensable for the proper rendering of the piece set down for me.

Always kind-hearted and ready to oblige, the Prince went to Her Majesty. Soon afterwards Costa came to me and showed me a programme in which the Queen had underlined the *Fra Diavolo* serenade, and had written in the margin the significant letters, "V.R." Costa pointed with a smile to the Royal command so concisely given, and said "You see there is no help for it."

Most unwilling to attempt what I knew I could not satisfactorily perform, I asked my wife to speak on the subject to Mrs. Anderson, wife of Mr. Anderson, director of Her Majesty's private band. But she could not venture, she said, to make any representations to Her Majesty respecting the proposed change in the programme. She knew that the Queen was determined to hear the serenade.

"When Her Majesty has once written 'V.R.,'" she explained, "she has made up her mind and will not alter it."

Fortunately Her Majesty had not ordered me to sing the air in the original key; and I took the liberty of transposing it to a lower one. The melody lost, no doubt, much of its brightness; but my voice was fatigued, and I had done my best in a difficult position. When I had finished singing Prince Albert came to me and said:

"The Queen is much obliged to you. You sang the air beautifully, though in too low a key."

I had treated it in fact very much against my will, as an air not for the tenor, but for the baritone voice.

While on the subject of oratorio, I may mention that I was the first to sing in England the whole of the tenor part in Bach's Passion Music. That great work was given some five-and-twenty years ago at St. James's Hall, I think, for the first time in complete form. Sterndale Bennett, who loved Bach's music, and took the greatest interest in the performance, conducted the work. But for him, indeed, the production would not have taken place; certainly not at that time. The singers were Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, Miss Dolby, Weiss, and myself. The tenor part, however, is in many places so unvocal, and the intervals are so awkward to take, that I was obliged to re-note it: without, of course, disturbing the accents or making it in any way unsuitable to the existing harmony. As soon as I had finished my work, to which I had devoted the greatest possible care, I submitted it to Bennett, who, except in one place, approved of all that I had done; and it is my version of the tenor part which was sung at Bennett's memorable performance, and which is still sung even to this day. All the most distinguished musicians and amateurs in London were present that evening; one of the most interesting that I remember.

To return for one moment to *Fra Diavolo.* I have often appeared with great success in this opera, but never under such peculiar conditions as once when I met with so serious an accident that I could scarcely go through the concluding scene. I had introduced new business, in which Fra Diavolo, after his hurried retreat from the bridge, leaps, as the soldiers fire at him, into the stream below. There is of course no danger in such a leap when four men, holding a feather bed, are ready to break the fall. But for some reason or other my recipients were not in their appointed places, and I came down on hard boards with the result of spraining, and indeed dislocating, my ankle.

Immediately afterwards I had to reappear on the stage, and though suffering the most acute pain I somehow managed to limp along. Every moment I thought I should have been forced to give up. I struggled on, however, stimulated, perhaps, by the very agony I was suffering, and finished the opera as though nothing had happened. But when the curtain fell, without any one perceiving my bodily distress, I was in a fainting condition, and had to be carried to my room. The effect must have been gratifying to the audience. The applause at the termination of the opera was quite overwhelming, and the call most enthusiastic. In a few minutes I was sufficiently recovered to respond, and was carried on the back of Mr. Henry Corri, who had been playing the part of Beppo, to receive the approbation of the audience. Mr. Corri afterwards explained the cause of this unusual exhibition.

I have said at the beginning of this volume that I once had a narrow escape of my life through being thrown from the back of a runaway horse on to a heap of sharp flints. Many years later, when I was playing the part of Edgardo at the Lyceum Theatre with Mrs. Reeves as Lucia, I was in a terrible railway accident which resulted in seven or eight persons being killed, while a great many were badly wounded. We had been singing at Brighton, and the train was just entering Croydon station when the collision took place.

I telegraphed to Mr. Allcroft, at that time manager of the Lyceum, saying that it would be impossible for us to get to him in time for the performance. The audience had waited at least half an hour beyond the time announced for commencing the opera when, without having time to eat more than a hasty snatch, my wife appeared on the stage to sing the cavatina, I following her soon afterwards to take part in the duet. The danger we had passed through being generally known, we were received with the utmost enthusiasm. I shall never forget Allcroft's excitement when we reached the theatre. He rushed on to the stage, pressing his Gibus hat with a great bang upon his stomach, calling out in a loud but trembling voice: "He's here,—The beggar's here!"

On another occasion at Cork, and once more in the opera of *Fra Diavolo,* I narrowly escaped severe injury by being fired into point-blank by the soldiers. Fortunately, I was not quite so close to them as I might have been. I was near enough, however, to receive several wads, which went through my cloak, pierced my jacket, and inflicted upon me severe contusions, from which I did not recover for several days.

Mention of the Cork Theatre reminds me of another incident in which the danger was not for me but for a small portion of the audience who had been disturbing the performance. Some officers of the garrison, who had taken boxes near the stage, persisted in smoking. This, besides being discourteous, interfered with my singing. I looked significantly into the box but without any effect, except that the audience observed my silent protest. At last I could stand it no longer, and, addressing the audience, said that unless the officers desisted from smoking I must have the curtain let down. Upon this the house rose, there was a general exit, and the officers, chased from their boxes, were pursued for some distance. They succeeded, fortunately for themselves, in getting away. Then the audience returned to the theatre, and the performance went on without further interruption.

# CHAPTER XIV.

## CHAPTER XIV.

I WAS always glad to assist in any well-designed endeavour that might be made to establish English opera; and in 1860 I willingly accepted an engagement from Mr. E. T. Smith, who, in partnership with Mr. Mapleson, had arranged to bring out a new work by G. A. Macfarren to a libretto by Mr. John Oxenford, on the subject of *Robin Hood.*

Mr. E. T. Smith was not a manager who did things by halves. He had a preference, indeed, for doing things by doubles. He once arranged a double performance of *Il Trovatore* with two stages, an extra one built up above the ordinary stage, as in the last act of *Aïda*, and in more than one melodrama of an earlier period. A double cast of Verdi's popular opera had been provided; and while Grisi, at the head of one quartet, sang the part of Leonora on the ground floor, Titiens, at the head of another quartet, was to sing it on the floor above.

At another time, Mr. Smith planned an equestrian performance of this same work, in which Leonora, Azucena, Manrico, and the Count di Luna were all to appear on horseback. The representation did not come off; though some of the singers would probably have done so had it taken place.

At Her Majesty's Theatre, however, in the year 1860, Mr. E. T. Smith did really succeed in giving a double performance, which must have been quite after his own heart, the more so, as it was on one side at least attended with genuine success. In order to give himself a two-fold chance, while economizing in his orchestral expenditure, he planned two sets of operatic representations, one in English the other in Italian, with, of course, two separate companies, but with a single orchestra. There were two conductors. Signor Arditi acted in this capacity for the Italian company, with

Titiens as *prima donna,* Madame Lemaire as contralto, Giuglini as principal tenor, and Beletti as leading baritone; Mr. (now Sir Charles) Hallé officiated as conductor to the English company, which included, for *Robin Hood,* Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, Madame Lemaire (who did double duty), Mr. Santley, Mr. Patey, Mr. Honey, Mr. Parkinson, and myself. In addition to the vocalists who were to take part in Macfarren's new work, the English company comprised Mademoiselle Parepa (afterwards Madame Parepa Rosa), Mademoiselle Jenny Bauer, Miss Laura Baxter, Miss Fanny Huddart, Mr. Swift, Mr. George Perren, Mr. Patey, and others.

It was said at the time that in consequence of the enormous success of *Robin Hood,* it interfered with the receipts of the Pyne and Harrison company at Covent Garden; which called forth the remark from Mr. E. T. Smith that it was not "Robin Hood, but robbin' Harrison."

"The undertaking," wrote the *Musical World,* in reference to Mr. E. T. Smith's double combination, "is curious and important, and may prove hazardous. We think it somewhat bold in Mr. Smith, after securing so capital an English company,—one, indeed, which almost ensures success *à priori*,—to engage an Italian company to interfere with that success. Mr. Sims Reeves no doubt is a powerful attraction, and he has a public of his own which will not be moved from him by any Italian allurements. But we cannot hide from ourselves the fact that an immense temptation is proffered to the public in being afforded a means of hearing Mademoiselle Titiens and Signor Giuglini at playhouse prices."

"Mr. E. T. Smith," continued our lively contemporary, after the manager had opened Her Majesty's Theatre with his two-fold enterprise, "is in the position of a skilful sportsman who shoots with a double-barrelled gun. If one barrel miss fire the other is sure to hit,—that is, provided the aim be straight and the gun properly loaded. But sometimes even with these provisions, though the hand be steady and the sight be clear and well directed,—though the powder be from the best mills, and the shot be undeniably spherical,—the object is not hit,—if hit, to no purpose, the bird flies away unscathed and leaves the sportsman to lament over his bad luck; for what sportsman would admit that the failure was to be attributed to himself?"

"As regards Mr. Macfarren's new opera," said the same periodical a week or two later, "a greater and more legitimate success than that achieved by this work we never witnessed. The crowd was immense, the excitement unusual, the expectation on tiptoe. That Mr. John Oxenford was the author of the libretto gave a new interest to the performance, and all the musicians and poets in London, and many far from London, were in their places, anxious and expectant, long before the curtain rose. Moreover, the cast of the parts presented an unusual attraction in itself. Mr. Sims Reeves, who, except during his annual visit to the National Standard in the Oriental suburbs, has not appeared for years on the London boards, was to play the principal character; and Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, who has never appeared on the stage at all, was to make her *début*. Mr. Santley, too, and Mr. George Honey, from the Royal English Opera, were both included in the cast.

"The pieces which received most applause were the overture, encored and repeated; the duet for Locksley and Marian, 'When lovers are parted,' exquisitely warbled by Mr. Sims Reeves and Madame Sherrington; the song for Marian, 'True love, true love, in my heart,' the subject of which is frequently employed throughout the opera; Locksley's song, 'Englishmen by birth are free,' magnificently sung by Mr. Sims Reeves, who refused to accept the encore called for by the entire audience; the *finale* to the second act commencing with the round, 'May the saints protect and guide thee,' Robin Hood's song, 'The grasping, rasping, Norman race,'—another splendid piece of vocalization; the whole fair scene at Nottingham, a masterpiece throughout; Locksley's ballad, 'Thy gentle voice would lead me on,' the most graceful and flowing air in the opera, given to perfection by Mr. Sims Reeves; the *finale* to the second act, the most elaborate and powerful composition in the opera; and Locksley's grand *scena* in the prison.

"Of Mr. Sims Reeves it is impossible to speak too highly. He was never in finer voice, never sang more magnificently, nor, in the course of his lengthened career, did he ever create a more profound impression. The music of *Robin Hood* is extremely varied; and whether as the sentimental lover wooing Marian, as the free-born Saxon denouncing foreign oppression, or the doomed outlaw in the gaol lamenting his approaching fate, the singing of Mr. Reeves was equally admirable."

In a subsequent notice the same paper wrote: "*Robin Hood* continues to draw immense audiences, and the interest the performance created on the first night increases with each successive repetition. As the music is heard oftener, its beauties become more apparent, and its purpose is rendered more distinct. This is the best compliment that could be paid to the opera, and proves that its merits are not superficial nor its attractions merely of the *ad captandum* kind. So great indeed is the success that it weakens in some respects the prestige of the alternate Italian nights; and Mr. Sims Reeves, Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, etc., now warble to more multitudinous ears than Mademoiselle Titiens and Signor Giuglini, even with the aid of *Don Giovanni.* It is lucky for Mr. Buckstone that the Haymarket Theatre is so near Her Majesty's. The 'overflows' to *Robin Hood* have helped to 'cram' the elegant little temple of comedy opposite. Of the principal singers engaged in the performance of *Robin Hood* we cannot speak too favourably. Mr. Sims Reeves was never better suited; and besides his wonderfully spirited declamation of the songs elsewhere quoted, gives the arduous *scena* of the prison, late as it appears in the opera, with an enthusiasm that imparts itself to the audience, and encourages the belief that he could go through the whole of his music again with the utmost ease, so fresh and vigorous is his voice,—so unabated his' energy.'

About this time, in the month of December, 1860, I had the misfortune to lose my father, and for a time I ceased to appear in public. I have, at the beginning of this volume, spoken of the strictness, indeed the severity, with which my father enforced discipline in connection with my earliest music lessons. Let me here show what an affectionate heart he possessed, what a tender interest he took in all that concerned my welfare, and how delighted he was to think that the pupil over whose beginnings he had so carefully watched had at last achieved as great a success as a singer could well obtain.

"North Cray,

March 25th, 1850.

"My Dear Boy,—For a fond parent to have to congratulate a child, requires some consideration, as too much excitement on the father's part may lead him to express himself too warmly on a subject dear to his heart. However that may be, I cannot refrain from giving vent to my feelings upon your most triumphant *début* on this last occasion at Her Majesty's Theatre. You know of what excitable materials I am composed, judge then of the unequivocal satisfaction and delight with which I read the public journals in which your success was lauded. Had I the tongue of Peel or the pen of Scott, all I could say or write would fall far short to convey to you the unmitigated delight I felt at the magnificent reception you met with. It is seldom that I can sit down to express my sentiments on personalities, but on this occasion I cannot, must not refrain, if I did, apathy would become a crime, and render me unjust both to you and myself. Accept then, my dear boy, this languid tribute to your splendid talents; receive it with a sincerity that emanates from my heart's very core, and believe me, were I dying, I would say that I never on any occasion felt such sublime felicity. For your future glory and renown I most devoutly pray, and commit you to that Omnipotent keeping in which are the issues of life and death, and most religiously pray that you may be spared many years to be a national ornament, and a blessing and comfort to your most affectionate father,

"J. S. Reeves."

When, after a period of absence, I returned to Her Majesty's Theatre, the *Daily Telegraph* published the following article: "On Tuesday night, Mr. Sims Reeves made his first appearance in public since the loss of his father deprived the public of his invaluable services. We constantly hear reflections made on the capriciousness of artists, and as in most cases these observations are totally unfounded, we are always glad of an opportunity to give full credit to those who do their very utmost to keep faith with the public. It ought to be made known that Mr. Sims Reeves has throughout the season strained every nerve in order to avoid disappointing his audiences. During the run of *Robin Hood,* he has contracted no other engagement; indeed, he has never once sung at the concerts at which he usually appears,—as he was expected to do on the off-nights of Her Majesty's Opera,—fearing lest the additional exertion might possibly prevent his doing full justice to the part he had undertaken to perform. Mr. Reeves has thus made real and tangible sacrifices for the sake of aiding the success of national opera, and this proof of self-denying devotion to his art will be fully appreciated by all. Certainly the warmth of the reception accorded to him last night seemed to express sympathy with the man as much as admiration for the artist. Mr. Sims Reeves was in splendid voice, the enforced rest having exerted an evidently beneficial influence, and he never sang with more expression or effect. 'Thou art my own, my guiding star,' was deliciously rendered, and vehemently applauded, while the spirited drinking song was given with immense vigour; it was, however, in the long and arduous *scena* of the prison that the exquisite taste and consummate skill in vocalization of the great tenor were both most remarkably displayed."

# CHAPTER XV.

## CHAPTER XV.

IN 1862 I gave a grand concert, at which a cantata by Balfe, on the subject of Mazeppa, was produced. The work had been composed for me, and it was well spoken of at the time of its production. It is recorded, for instance, in the journals of the time that piece after piece was applauded with warmth and unanimity. Mazeppa's opening air was particularly successful. But the cantata, as a whole, had no lasting success. Few cantatas, indeed, have been destined to meet with the popularity which so many operas enjoy. Even Sterndale Bennett's beautiful *May Queen*, though certainly not forgotten by musicians, is now rarely, if ever, played in public. The form is unsatisfactory in every cantata. There is generally some attempt at dramatic interest, but even the best of these works are merely operas unacted, and for the most part unactable.

My best recollections of the year 1862 are connected with a concert tour undertaken in company with the most perfect singer it has been my lot to hear. This lady, the late Madame Jenny Lind, was also one of the best and most charming women it has been my good fortune to meet.

Apart from her singing, Jenny Lind was an excellent musician. She played the piano beautifully, and improvised wonderfully.

She had a strong sense of duty in all matters, great and small; was kind-hearted and deeply religious. What particular form of religion she professed I do not know. She said her grace (which she never, under any circumstances, omitted to do) in the simplest English form.

As regards this question of Jenny Lind's religion, I remember that when she was singing at Norwich in *Elijah*, she delivered in quite an inspired manner the beautiful passage, "Holy, holy, holy is God, the Lord." The Bishop of Norwich was sitting next Mrs. Reeves, and said to her, as Jenny Lind finished the phrase,

"A string of pearls, and all of the same size."

More struck by the singer's devotional feeling than even by the perfection of her style, my wife said,

"I wonder of what religion she is?"

"She is a Christian," replied the Bishop.

As a travelling companion Jenny Lind was delightful. Her temper was equal, her feelings always under control. I never knew any one so strict in the observation of self-prescribed rules. Sometimes, in the evening, when there was no concert, she would join in a game of cards. The first time she did so we went on playing until, precisely at ten o'clock, she placed her cards on the table, and smilingly wished us all good night. When she was not singing she made a point of retiring to rest as the clock struck ten.

On this first occasion we were astonished to see that as she rose from her chair she stopped up her ears with wool.

"What can be the meaning of this?" I asked.

She replied that there were noises in the street, and that she could not sleep unless everything was perfectly quiet around her.

"But there is the danger of fire," exclaimed my wife.

"Oh, if I am fated to be burnt, I shall be burnt, and nothing can stop it," she answered. "Besides," she added, "you sleep in the next room, and if anything happened, you would be sure to call me."

She was as particular about her diet as I myself have always been. Under these circumstances she thought she might safely ask me to dinner, even on the days when we were both to sing, though, as a rule, she would receive no one, and would sometimes even decline to speak if she was to sing the same evening.

I prefer, when I have to sing at night, to dine alone, partly because I can then confine myself to such simple fare as best agrees with me, partly also to avoid too much conversation. Jenny Lind, however, argued, with some reason, that as we both confined ourselves to simple fare, and were both too prudent to indulge in excessive talk, we might safely dine together. As I still declined her most friendly invitation, she at last rang the bell, and said to the waiter,

"Place Mr. Reeves's dinner on my table."

Although it is not very closely connected with the main subject of my narrative, I may here mention a strange thing that was once done by a waiter in my presence.

I was travelling with a concert party directed by Mr. ———. Singers who take any care of themselves find it absolutely necessary to dine some four or five hours before appearing in public; and our dinner had been ordered,—say for four o'clock. At the hour fixed there were no signs or it, and, as the waiter did not respond to an ordinary summons, Mr. ——— rang violently and continuously until at last a waiter, with a red face and excited manner, entered the room.

"Who has been ringing that bell?" he asked.

"I have," replied Mr. ———.

"Then don't you do it again," replied the waiter, who at the same time rushed out of the room.

We all burst into a laugh, too much amused to take serious notice of such grotesque behaviour.

To return to my somewhat disconnected recollections of Jenny Lind. I took the greatest pleasure in hearing her sing the *scena* from *Beatrice di Tenda*. With what perfect execution, and, at the same time, with what depth of feeling did she sing the air, and how dazzling were her embellishments, many ornamental passages being of her own invention! Never did I miss an opportunity of hearing her sing this *scena*, whether at the public performance or at the rehearsal; Piatti and Beletti, who belonged to our concert party, were as eager to hear her as I myself.

Another marvellous performance of hers was the air, with the concerted accompaniment of two flutes, in the *Camp of Silesia*, afterwards introduced into *L'Etoile du Nord*, when Meyerbeer introduced that remodelled work at the Opéra Comique of Paris. How she did practise the *cadenza*, singing it again and again until every note, every *nuance*, was perfectly right!

"Was it not right before?" I asked on one occasion, when she had been repeating the *cadenza* again and again.

"It was right in one sense," she replied; "but the notes were not all equal."

I had discovered her singing by herself in the room adjoining the stage box in Her Majesty's Theatre,—the old building afterwards destroyed by fire. She already knew the *cadenza.* She already sang it, as any one but herself would have thought, in perfection. But her singing did not quite come up to her own ideal; and she never looked upon her study as complete while there was still some point of excellence unattained.

She owed much to nature, but much also to artistic training, and to her own unfailing conscientiousness. Garcia, under whom she was studying at the time, once said, in reference to her and another of his pupils, an admirably-endowed singer named Nissen, that if Jenny Lind had Nissen's voice, or Nissen Jenny Lind's intellectuality and application, the result in either case would have been a perfect singer.

"But I *will* have the voice," said Jenny Lind, in whose presence the remark was made.

Her sense of the duty she owed to the public was very strong. But she was tender-hearted and reverential; and once, when news of a terrible calamity reached her as she was about to sing at Chester, she scarcely knew whether or not the concert ought to be postponed, and in her difficulty appealed to the Bishop.

Prince Albert was dead, and the melancholy intelligence had just been received by telegraph. People were coming, however, from a great distance, and consequently at considerable expense, to the concert; and the Bishop's view, after due reflection, was that they ought not to be disappointed. Scarcely any one in the town knew of the sad event; and when, at the opening of the concert, Jenny Lind appeared in black, and sang, with the deepest feeling, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," no one understood the signification of such a performance given in such a manner.

Let me here remark that Jenny Lind sang this beautiful air in accordance with the intentions of the composer, and with the requirements of common sense. She did not, that is to say, take breath, as so many singers do, after the word "my;" but bound word and note to the word and note following.

No singer was ever less vain than Jenny Lind. She was scarcely, indeed, satisfied with herself, keeping always before her an ideal which she found it difficult to attain. She appreciated praise all the same, when it proceeded from any one whose opinion she valued, and whom she knew to be sincere.

"Otto," she once said to her husband, "I have sung well to-night."

"My dear, you always sing well," replied Mr. Goldschmidt.

"No, but Mr. Reeves says that I sing well," she continued; "and he does not say such things too often."

Had I told her how perfectly she sang whenever I felt impressed by that fact, my assurances would have been frequent indeed.

Among the agreeable companions with whom I have travelled on various provincial tours, I must not forget to mention my old friend, Mr. Santley. I first met him at one of the concerts of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society. He at that time played the violin in the orchestra, and also assisted in the semi-chorus. He introduced himself to me in order to ask my advice as to his relinquishing the orchestra for the concert platform or the operatic stage. I asked him to sing something to me, and found that he had an exquisite baritone voice. I told him what a very high opinion I had of his gifts, and recommended him to continue for a time his studies as a vocalist, after which I predicted for him the greatest success. When I recommended him to go to Italy, he asked me for information as to where he would find the best singing masters, what the cost of living would be, and so on. By my advice, he went direct to Milan, and there studied under an eminent professor, whose "Method" he afterwards translated for Boosey. I had the pleasure of singing with him on the occasion of his first appearance in England. We have always remained the best friends, and I never had a more congenial companion on tour.

After my tours with Jenny Lind, I appeared at Her Majesty's Theatre in *Faust*, then at the very height of its success, and with Mademoiselle Titiens playing the part of Margherita. I liked the part, and may fairly say that I made a deep impression in a character which so many tenors of the highest position have tried to make their own.

Here, again, instead of speaking for myself, I must fall back on the public records of the time. "Mr. Sims Reeves," wrote one of the best critical journals of the day, "is, as an accomplished oratorio singer must be, great in recitative. His excellence in this respect enables him to put an interest in the opening scene which it has hitherto lacked. His utterance of the soliloquy of the old philosopher is full of points which reveal a dramatic instinct. This, added to the splendid energy which he throws into the closing duet with Mephistopheles, brings the first act into its proper degree of prominence, and saves the story from seeming, what most representatives have made it, a love tale and nothing more. In the more exciting scenes he is no less successful. No other singer that we know unites the two qualities of declamatory vigour and tenderness of expression. Both of these are wanted to make a complete Faust, and in virtue of this combination, all question of acting apart, it must be allowed that no performance of the music has yet come up to his. Mr. Reeves, moreover, was in exceptionally 'good voice' on Saturday last; his tone was magnificent. May this happy state of his larynx continue till all musical London has been to hear him."

I must not forget to mention that while I was singing at the Royal Italian Opera, Mario and myself appeared together for the first and only time in Rossini's *Donna del Lago;* Mario taking the part of Fitz-James, myself that of Roderick Dhu.

There are not, indeed, many operas in which parts for two first tenors of equal importance are to be found. The two great tenor parts in *La Donna del Lago* were written for Davide and Nozzari, who were both engaged under the famous impresario Barbaja at the San Carlo of Naples, when Rossini composed his work specially for that theatre. Two such tenors as Nozzari and Davide being engaged in the company, Rossini, of course, provided both of them with suitable parts. It may be interesting to note that these two tenors, though of necessity rivals in their art, were always excellent friends. They were both, moreover, on the most intimate terms with Rossini; so much so, that when the great Italian composer married Mademoiselle Colbran, who created the *prima donna* part in *La Donna del Lago*, they accompanied the happy pair from Naples to Bologna, in order to be present at the wedding ceremony which the Archbishop of Bologna desired to perform.

Now I think of it, there is one other opera in which two leading tenor parts occur,—Mercadante's *Bravo.* In this work the two tenors have a duet which was once sung at a Court concert by Signor Mario and myself. Still another, "Otello."

# Chapter XVI.

## CHAPTER XVI.

A CHAPTER might be written on Festival incidents, and especially Festival fun; for in the bygone days there were "mad wags" in the orchestra who delighted in practical jokes. One of these I well remember at Worcester. Just as the good folk of that most staid and decorous town were soberly, not to say solemnly, wending their way to the morning oratorio in the Cathedral, their vision was startled by a marvellous apparition. Those who are acquainted with the "faithful city" will not have forgotten a certain hotel in one of the principal streets known as the Golden Lion, whose proud effigy, carved in wood and highly gilt, adorns, or adorned (for it may now have disappeared), the front of the edifice. On this occasion the noble beast appeared in a novel guise, his head being decorated with a billycock hat perched jauntily on one side, while his neck was encased in a high collar surrounded by a so-called "Joinville" tie,—a showy sort of silk or satin cravat named after the French prince who at that time commanded his country's naval forces; while between his lips the king of the forest held a short clay pipe. Who was the author of this surprising jest it is not for me to say; but the leading trumpet-player of the day, or an equally celebrated professor of the horn, could, I fancy, throw some light on the subject.

At some of the Festivals the stewards seemed to think that their principal duty consisted in wearing rosettes and behaving officiously, not to say fussily. On one occasion I felt it a duty to my art and to the public to administer a reproof to certain of these magnates who, seated directly in front of the orchestra, talked in tones that were not only audible as between themselves, but which could be heard by every one in their neighbourhood. Finding that the sternest look I could command failed to awe them into silence I made a dead stop in my song, and keeping my eyes fixed on their amazed countenances, said, in a sufficiently loud voice, "When you have finished your conversation I will go on with my singing." This piece of information reduced them at once to silence; and the hearty applause which followed showed how completely the audience approved of the step I had taken.

Of course, there are stewards and stewards; and those who undertake the office at places like Birmingham, Leeds, etc., are mostly men of business who understand their duties. The amateur officials, however, of the Three Choir Music Meetings are, or were, often of the county magistrate class, who, in the habit of sentencing petty offenders, seemed, in some cases, to have unduly developed their feelings of self-importance.

None but those who have been intimately connected with Festival doings can conceive the amount of hard work which the performers have to cram into the five days of those gatherings. The whole of the Monday, from ten o'clock in the morning till eleven at night, with the exception of short intervals for lunch and dinner, is absorbed by rehearsals. Then follow four long morning and three or four still longer evening performances.

On one occasion the work was unusually heavy, and I was so exhausted that, at one of the evening concerts, I begged Madame Clara Novello, then in the zenith of her well-deserved celebrity, to replace me, which she at once consented to do. Having notified to the conductor the change in the programme, I went away under the impression that everything necessary had been done. But, when the time came for me to appear, and when Madame Clara Novello appeared in my place, a whole band of the stewards mounted the orchestra, so that the audience began to wonder what next would happen, and whether, perchance, the stewards did not intend to sing, after the manner of nigger minstrels, "We are a band of brothers," or some similar ditty of the time. The appointed spokesman of the party, however, contented himself with making a speech, in which he said that, Mr. Sims Reeves having walked off without saying a word to any one, Madame Clara Novello had kindly consented to sing in his stead.

Madame Novello was equal to the occasion, and stepping to the front began, not her song, but a brief speech to the following effect :—"I think that the gentleman who has just spoken is under a misapprehension. Mr. Sims Reeves, before leaving the Hall, had asked me to take his place, which I have much pleasure in doing; and when he had informed the conductor (the only person to whom he was responsible) of this arrangement, he did all that was required of him. In justice, therefore, to a brother artist, I cannot allow such a statement as that which has just been made to pass unheeded, and trust you will accept my explanation in justification of Mr. Sims Reeves."

How this neat little speech was received can be readily understood.

It was in connection with a Festival, not a provincial Festival, but the first of the Handel Festivals at the Crystal Palace, that an incident occurred which has no musical importance, but which amuses me when I look back upon it. I was living at the time in a furnished house at Norwood, and my landlord, who lived on the premises, entertained a morbid horror of burglars. On the last day of the Festival I celebrated its conclusion by a dinner or supper to some of my friends, who proved their appreciation of my hospitality by remaining with me until about three the next morning. At last I had almost to turn them out; and to show how glad I was to get rid of them I, in simple good humour, threw after them, as they went downstairs, several tin trays which, falling with what Milton calls, a "lively din," made the house resound with sonorous echoes. My friends, meanwhile, to escape the noisy, rather than dangerous, missiles, fled as if for their lives. Suddenly awakened from his sleep, and hearing the sound of retreating footsteps, my landlord rose from his bed, seized a loaded blunderbuss, which he kept always at hand, and fired into the midst of my rapidly-departing friends. Fortunately the discharge had no effect.

One of the most perfect singers of sacred music with whom I was ever associated was Madame Clara Novello. When this distinguished artist was engaged at Drury Lane under the Macready management, she appeared without any brilliant success in an English version of Pacini's *Sappho;* not that she did not sing the *prima donna's* part exceedingly well, but because Pacini's music is cold. Fancy a cold Sappho!

She produced a far better impression as Galatea in the *Acis and Galatea* of Handel. This work, indeed, was admirably cast in all the parts; Miss Priscilla Horton representing Acis, and Staudigl Polyphemus, while the little part of the shepherd was sung charmingly by a favourite tenor of that time named Allen. Staudigl was a great dramatic singer, and, from a dramatic point of view, the most impressive Elijah I have heard.

Some of the foreign singers who at this time used to visit England were rather careless in their habits. I remember a curious account given of the daily life of one of them by his agent, a certain Herr Schloss.

"How does the great man get through his day?" was asked of Herr Schloss.

"Vell, he sing," was the reply.

"Yes, but what else? He does not sing all day."

“Vell, he get up in the morning, he have breakfasht, vid a goot shlice of German shausage, and he eat vera moch. Then he shmoke; and ven he finish shmoke, he lie down to repose himself. Zen he shmoke again. He shmoke vera moch. After zat, he dine. He eat vera moch, and drink moch shtout. Zen he lie down, and repose himself, zat he may get strength to sing in the evening. And after he sing he have supper, and again he eat vera moch and drink moch shtout. Zo it go on day by day. He get up in ze morning, put on his clothes, and—

“When does he take his bath?”

“Oh, he never vash himself.”

Molique once imputed to himself, and also to his wife, a fault which certainly belonged to neither of them.

It was his birthday, and the event was being celebrated by some of his friends, who made it an opportunity for presenting him with a mark of their esteem. Molique rose to return thanks, and did so as nearly as possible in the following words,—

“I dank you vera moch for your lofely present, vich I shall always keep and always falue. I am nod a speaker, but I must say vonce more dat I dank you. Dis is de habbiest birthday I have known. You made reference to my age, and it may interest you to know that my vife is dirty and I am dirty-two."

To return to Clara Novello's operatic performances. She went, I remember, on a tour which was managed by Mr. Stretton, a well-known baritone, who also acted as treasurer to the company. At Cork the manager of the theatre was a Mr. Seymour, familiarly known as "Chouse," from his having, in a farce of the period, exclaimed, instead of "chaos has come again," "chouse has come again."

He justified this name in other ways. When in the course of the Clara-Novello tour the time had come for the manager to settle up that gentleman was nowhere to be found.

"Where is Mr. Seymour?" asked Stretton of the various officials.

"Just gone out, sir," was the reply. "He was looking for you a minute ago."

"Well, tell him I am very anxious to see him," said Stretton. "Let him come round to my hotel. He knows what I want to see him about, and we have to start to-morrow morning by the eight o'clock coach."

Mr. Seymour, otherwise "Chouse," sent round message after message to Stretton's hotel, saying that he had made up his accounts, and was now only counting the money out in sovereigns, which Mr. Stretton should have in a bag, so that he might conveniently make any disbursements which would be necessary on the road. Stretton reflected, no doubt, that Mr. Seymour's sovereigns would possess greater value than his cheque, and waited anxiously for the promised gold.

Mr. Seymour's last message had been to the effect that the sovereigns would be sent round the first thing in the morning before the coach started. But the " first thing in the morning " went by, the coach was on the point of starting, and the bag of gold had not turned up. At last, just as the coachman was raising his whip, Stretton and the rest of the company having in despair taken their places, Mr. Seymour was seen in the distance, running as if for his life, with a good-sized bag in his hand. The coachman delayed his start. The money was handed up to Stretton, who grasped it like a miser, then the horn was sounded, and away went the four horses.

After some minutes, either to kill time, from natural curiosity, or perhaps in consequence of some latent suspicion, Stretton opened the bag, and found it full of—farthings!

# CHAPTER XVII.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE most interesting part of a singer's, as of an actor's, life is almost always its beginning. The young aspirant can never be sure that he will succeed; and he is fortunate indeed if, at the outset of his career, he has not difficulties of many kinds to contend with. Even when he has made a marked success in one style, it does not follow as a matter of course that he will be equally fortunate in another; and though the public of one country may applaud him, that of another may receive him with coldness.

The reader has seen that I began my operatic career in Italy, that I continued it in England at Her Majesty's Theatre, at the Théâtre des Italiens of Paris, at the Royal Italian Opera, and (in English opera) at Drury Lane, and again at Her Majesty's Theatre. I had not been long before the world as an operatic singer, when I turned my attention to oratorio; and from the first I sang occasionally, and at times frequently, at concerts.

With one series of concerts, which has now enjoyed a thirty years' success, I was closely connected from the very beginning. The Popular Concerts had their origin in certain concerts of a miscellaneous character, which used to be given during the Cattle-show week for the the advantage of visitors from the country who preferred ditties which, after a single hearing, they themselves could hum, to string quartets, which in no way appealed to them. It was from Mr. Arthur Chappell's popular concerts of the miscellaneous kind that the Monday Populars took their rise. I sang at the "Monday Pops," and I believe that my singing had a certain effect in promoting their success at a time when the generality of the London public had but little taste for chamber music.

It was as a concert singer that I made my first appearance at Paris, doing so just before I undertook the part of Ernani at the Théâtre des Italiens.

After singing much in opera, Italian and English, I was invited to assume the leading part in what is really a comedy with songs, though *Beggar's Opera* is its historic name. This was something quite new to me. Edgardo, Carlo, Ernani, and the many impassioned lovers whom I had been in the habit of representing on the Italian stage, are never for a moment comic. For any of these characters to raise a laugh, a smile, or even the faintest symptom of hilarity, would be fatal to the impersonation. Macheath, on the other hand, may be as lively as he pleases; the livelier the better.

On one occasion, a member of my gang had taken the liberty of getting intoxicated. This a robber of his kind might possibly have done in actual life. But his chief would not have allowed him to get drunk on duty; and I was much put out when, playing the part of Captain Macheath one evening on a provincial tour, I found one of my men in a comparatively helpless condition from over-indulgence in drink. The chorus of robbers had to go off; but my inebriated friend was either unwilling or unable to make his exit. He was, at least, very sluggish about it: and as his face was already turned towards the wing, I helped him off by means of a kick, administered in a lively, devil-may-care style. I had really rendered him a service by promoting his exit, and but for me it would not have been made at the proper time. He did not take this view of the matter, and the next day summoned me to the police court, when, after hearing my evidence, the magistrate (evidently a lover of art) dismissed the case.

In commenting on the proceedings, one of the newspapers said, by some mistake, that the incident had taken place in the opera of *Guy Mannering;* on which I sent a letter to the journal, pointing out that Henry Bertram, the gentle hero of that work, would never have kicked a subordinate, and that it would have been out of harmony with the character to have made him do so. Captain Macheath, however, might really have behaved in the unceremonious manner which I had adopted in getting rid of a troublesome customer, whose behaviour well deserved the practical reprimand it received.

Many years afterwards I was playing the part of Tom Tug in company with my excellent friend, Toole, who was also a leading member of the cast. In the *Waterman* a word or two of "gag" is held to be permissible; and, partly to amuse the audience, partly to astonish, and, if possible, irritate my excellent fellow-actor, one of the most good-natured of men, I said to him in a certain scene, in reply to his question, "What's the meaning of all this, d—— me." "The meaning of it is that you've been made a *tool* of, and I'm a happy fellow." "Johnnie" looked very much surprised; and as a popular comedian does not, if he can help it, allow himself to be scored off, he, after a moment's reflection, during which he must have suffered the keenest agony, replied, "So it *sims.*"

# CHAPTER XVIII.

# CHAPTER XVIII.

## A FEW STRAY RECOLLECTIONS.

IT will not here be out of place to offer to the whole British public my sincere and heartfelt thanks for the unbounded and generous enthusiasm with which I have, from the first, been received; for among Irish, Welsh, Scotch, or English, I have always found the same hearty welcome.

At my first visit to Edinburgh, for instance, I met with quite an ovation. I appeared in the Ballad Opera, or Play, of *Rob Roy*, and the cast was as follows:—Rob Roy was represented by Edmund Glover; Rashleigh Osbaldistone, by Barry Sullivan; Captain Thornton, by Leigh Murray; Owen by Lloyd, Major Galbraith by Murray, the manager, an eccentric, but very gentlemanly person; and the Bailie, by Mackay, whose performance was so highly eulogized by Sir Walter Scott. It was, indeed, a very interesting performance, and I greatly enjoyed it. I forget who played Helen Macgregor, but Sarah Woolgar was the Diana Vernon, to my own Francis Osbaldistone.

A curious incident happened at this representation. In my first scene, where Francis sings "My love is like the red, red rose," the lights suddenly went out, and old Swan, the property-man, proceeded to relight them. The orchestra had finished the symphony, and I had commenced to sing, when I suddenly paused, and told Swan to make haste, as I could not go on till he had finished. This incensed the manager, who, at the end of the act, summoned me to his room, and read me a long lecture on having ventured to take, what he chose to term, a liberty. I have already said, however, that he was eccentric.

At the Grecian Theatre, in London, I appeared under the management of Mr. Rouse. I found the entertainments, however, so mixed up with smoking and drinking that I very soon took my leave. I was present when he made his memorable speech as to the loss of his purse. There had been a great crush at the doors, and he was attempting to get the people into the theatre, when, in the confusion, some one picked his pocket. As soon as the audience were seated, he went on to the stage and delivered himself of the following pretty speech—"Gentlemen, I've lost my purse." This announcement was received with loud and prolonged laughter and cheers, at which he was rather disconcerted. At this moment, however, some one came on the stage, and put something into his hand, which he carefully examined. When he had done so, he recommenced—"Gentlemen, I've found my purse." This caused a second outburst of cheers and laughter, which culminated in an uproar, on his saying: "I've found my purse, but there is no money in it." The scene was almost indescribable, and continued for several minutes. The farce of the *Lottery Ticket* followed this episode, but its fun was completely spoilt by the farcical performance which had preceded it.

From the Grecian I went to Worcester, a very sleepy city, except at Festival times. I little thought at that period that I was destined to be engaged as principal tenor at the Festivals. Mr. James Bennett was the chief tragedian at Worcester. He was a very thoughtful actor, but deficient in physique. Bob Romer, a brother of Miss Romer, who achieved a great success in John Barnett's *Mountain Sylph* and Handel's *Galatea*, was principal low comedian. On one occasion, when the play was Hamlet, in which I impersonated Guildenstern and Osric, singing a song, dressed as Osric, between the acts, a comic disaster occurred. One of the dressing-rooms was underneath the stage, and was used for Ophelia's grave, the large trap opening into it. Romer was working away, and as first clown throwing up supposed clods of earth, and singing, "A pick-axe and a spade, a spade," &c., when suddenly the planks on which he was standing collapsed, and he fell through, causing considerable merriment to the very sparse attendance in the front. These planks were placed upon two chairs, which I and my confederate—there were two of us in the joke—simultaneously pulled away. Romer never found out who did the deed until many years afterwards, when I met him at the Adelphi Theatre. He was then highly amused, and laughed immoderately at the affair. I have played many such pranks during my lengthened career, and I must own to a somewhat irresistible passion for practical jokes.

During an engagement as first singer at the Theatre Royal, Liverpool, under the management of Mr. Clarke, I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean. In the course of a performance of *As you like it,* I was very much complimented by Charles Kean upon my rendering of the songs, "Under the greenwood tree," and "Blow, blow thou wintry wind." He strongly urged me at the time to go to London, promising to procure me an engagement at one of the principal theatres; but I felt that I had so much more to learn before I made such a venture, that I firmly declined his kind offer.

From Liverpool I went to the Theatre Royal, Manchester, where I met with great favour from the public, but with very bitter treatment at the hands of a Mr. Sever, who held the post of critic to the *Manchester Guardian*. He was at the time a great friend of Mr. Donald King, whom I succeeded. There is, I am sorry to say, a good deal of the same prejudiced enmity even in the present day. Imaginary slights or private dislikes ought certainly not to influence any man holding the position of critic to a public journal. The stock company at the Theatre Royal at this time was an exceptionably good one.

Returning to the Theatre Royal at Edinburgh, I was employed more frequently in musical pieces, and as I found my voice developing, I began to think seriously of making my way to France and Italy. During my second visit to Edinburgh, I moved in very pleasant society, and made many friends. I frequently sang in the Roman Catholic chapel, and immensely enjoyed taking part in the Masses of Mozart, Haydn, and other masters. At the termination of the season we got up a walking tour, and visited all those places where the inhabitants were sufficiently numerous to patronize an entertainment such as we had to offer them. We usually gave a farce, interspersed with songs, comic and serious, and a short concert. In a few of the larger towns, where the theatre was available, we joined the company, and sometimes gave *Guy Mannering*. Our great difficulty was in finding instrumentalists. When they were unprocurable we hired a piano, at which I presided, and which was wheeled on and off the stage as occasion required. With this terrible makeshift we often had to be content. Our party at this time consisted of the following:—Lloyd, Sam Cowell, Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Murray, Miss Leigh, and myself. The ladies travelled by coach, but the gentlemen, as a rule, transported themselves on foot.

# CHAPTER XIX.

## CHAPTER XIX.

SINGING in all parts of the United Kingdom, and in all kinds of music, I gradually became convinced that some stand must be made on behalf of the singers against the constantly-increasing rise in the pitch; and in December, 1868, I addressed the following letter on the subject to the editor of the *Athenæum*:—

"Sir,—I read with great interest your comment upon Miss Hauck's Amina at Covent Garden, 'that it is high time the pitch of our orchestras should be adapted to the normal diapason' used in France and Germany. Your complaint is one which I have strenuously and repeatedly, although in vain up to the present, insisted upon; and I can only trust, now that so influential a paper in musical circles as yours has taken up the subject, that your complaint will meet with greater attention than my individual reiteration of it.

"Not only foreigners accustomed to foreign orchestras will be indebted to you for thus protesting against, as you most truly remark, 'the human voice,—the most delicate of all instruments,— being sacrificed to the false brilliancy attained by perpetually forcing up the pitch,' but also English artists generally. And, as you truly remark, 'the pitch in this country is half a tone higher than that of most foreign orchestras, and a whole tone higher than it was in the time of Gluck.'

"So strong is my conviction upon this subject, that some time back I intimated to the committee of the Sacred Harmonic Society my final decision,—and, notwithstanding grave reasons for my coming to a contrary determination,—not to sing for that Society so long as the pitch of the orchestra was maintained at its present height; and, until it was, as you suggest, 'assimilated to the normal diapason of France.'

"J. SIMS REEVES.

"Grange Mount, Beulah Spa,
"Upper Norwood, Nov. 10th."

Some time afterwards, returning to the subject, I addressed to the *Athenæum* a second letter, which ran as follows :—

"Grange Mount, Beulah Spa,
"Upper Norwood.

"It is very painful to me to be dragged into something like a public controversy by the personal remarks of your musical critic as to my being the 'main cause of an agitation that has led only to confusion and discord,' etc. No reform of standing abuses can be effected without a certain measure of debate. There are always opposing influences that must be overcome ; and temporary strife may be well purchased by the final advancement of the true interests of art. Uniformity, this gentleman assures us, can only be secured by legislative enactment, as in France. This may be so ; but though we are a law-abiding people we do not fly to a central authority on all occasions, and I almost fear that musical art is not yet quite sufficiently valued in this country for a legislative enactment of such a kind to be within the range of immediate probabilities. We must then, as individuals, do what we can and may; and I, for one, am willing to incur the charge of interested motives, which your critic, not very graciously perhaps, urges against me, if I thereby promote the cause of art and benefit my admirable fellow-artists, both English and foreign. And now to answer the allegations urged against me as briefly as possible :—

"1.—I really cannot take upon myself the credit for the reduction of the organ pitch at Birmingham, because it is notorious that this was an absolute necessity (and letters in my possession from the managers prove it), in order to conform the pitch to the reduced one at Drury Lane.

"2.—I can undertake to prove, if need be, by the forks in my possession, that the pitch in Italy and Germany has never been so high as that of Sir Michael Costa. I may mention in this connection that my esteemed friend, Herr Joachim, plays on a different violin in Germany with thicker strings. Here he brings one with thinner strings to suit the abnormal pitch. This one fact would be conclusive as to the continental usage in the eyes of unprejudiced inquiries.

"3.—If an unreasonable pitch was persisted in to the eleventh hour, and a sudden change then carried out and disasters evoked at Birmingham, as your contributor alleges, I can surely in no sense be held responsible. The chief artists at Drury Lane had previously forced a reasonable reduction of the pitch on Sir Michael Costa. If this reform had been steadily adhered to, there could have been no confusion and no disasters at Birmingham or elsewhere.

"4.—I declare unequivocally, and for the twentieth time, that I only ask for the pitch of Donzelli, David, Duprez, and Nourrit. I most entirely concur with that great composer, Mendelssohn, that to transpose airs in oratorios is highly objectionable. I am convinced that Handel, Mendelssohn, and all other masters felt the colour, as it were, of the keys they wrote and write in. Hence I am always unwilling to transpose; and that is just why I wish to secure the normal pitch, which will render transposing unnecessary.

"5.—With respect to those great artists, Madame Patti and Madame Nilsson, it is wholly unnecessary for me to vindicate their course of action, and I cannot but express my surprise at the liberty of comment which your musical critic has allowed himself, with regard to the latter artist more especially. Unpleasant personalities are surely out of place in the discussion of public interests, where private likes and dislikes should be wholly set aside. I need only further observe that the pitch at Hereford was tuned to that accepted now both at Covent Garden and Drury Lane.

“ I have no delusion on the subject of pitch ; uniformity is, doubtless, most desirable, but it must not be uniformity in that which is abnormal and extraordinary. The pertinacity of my old friend, Sir Michael Costa, has alone so long retarded this essential reform, which, however, may now be said to have carried the day finally. To the very personal concluding remarks of your contributor I have only to reply that I am quite willing to accept his assurances of good will, and to recognize his past assertions, that I necessarily am the chief loser by my inability at times to fulfil my engagements, whether to the directors or to the public. Nobody can regret, need I say, as deeply as I do, the practical extinction of voice from which I sometimes suffer; the kind and art-loving public will understand, I am sure, that I have made great pecuniary sacrifices because I did not like to take pay for services which I could not discharge so as to do justice to the music I was called upon to perform. Personal explanations are always painful things; to me, I may say, peculiarly so. It is certain I never disappoint the public without being far more grievously disappointed myself; but our frequent changes of temperature are most trying, and no care or caution can guarantee me against occasional attacks, which prohibit me for a season to leave the house, and yield my public services to that art which it is the highest ambition of my soul to forward by all the legitimate means within my reach.

"J. SIMS REEVES."

The question of pitch brings me naturally enough to the Handel Festival of 1877, at which

I, for reasons set forth in the above letters, declined to sing.

At the Festivals of 1857 and 1859, and at each succeeding Festival, until 1877, my singing in music which no Italian tenor could at any time have made in like manner his own, had always been looked forward to with no small interest.

In 1877 the performances were, as usual, conducted by Sir Michael Costa, who insisted on maintaining the abnormally high pitch to which I had so often expressed objection, and to which I had finally resolved not to conform. It was at the Festival of 1877 that Madame Albani sang for the first time in sacred music; and in noticing the event, the *Pall Mall Gazette* passed from what it called the "positive novelty" of the Festival to its "negative novelty." "If the appearance of Madame Albani in oratorio," said this journal, "was the greatest positive novelty in yesterday's performance, there was a novelty also of a negative kind which cannot be passed over. Mr. Sims Reeves, our greatest singer, and one who is especially great in sacred music, was not among the artists engaged; though, in justice to the directors of the Festival, it must be added that he was one of the first to whom an engagement was offered. That terrible question of pitch which has caused so much annoyance, and which might so easily be settled by our conforming in England, as has been already done in all the principal continental countries, to the 'normal diapason' of France, is understood to have been connected with Mr. Sims Reeves' unwillingness to sing. To replace the first of living tenors was rather a formidable undertaking."

"In recording the close of this year's Festival," wrote the *Daily News* critic on the same occasion, "it is impossible to avoid expressing a feeling of regret (such as must widely have been experienced) at the absence of Mr. Sims Reeves, whose co-operation has been so important a feature at each of the previous celebrations. No single individual has so especially identified himself with the tenor solo music of Handel, which heretofore was probably never, and perhaps hereafter may never again be, so finely rendered as by him. His transcendent merits as an exponent of the pathos, dignity, and declamatory grandeur intended by the composer (but so rarely realized by the interpreter) will long live in the memory of the appreciative section, now a large majority, of the musical public. These remarks imply no disparagement of other excellent tenors, who have obtained deserved eminence as Handelian singers. They themselves would be the first to admit the supremacy which has long been maintained by Mr. Reeves."

It has sometimes been argued that, even if the French normal diapason be adopted for vocal music, there can be no reason why, with a view to superior brilliancy, the higher pitch should not be maintained in England for purely orchestral music. What playing, however, could be more brilliant than that of the orchestras so admirably directed by M. Lamoureux and M. Colonne, who, it need scarcely be said, observe, like all French conductors, the "diapason normal?"

One obstacle (which must frankly be recognized as such) to the general adoption of the normal diapason in England arises from the fact that the instruments of our military bands are all manufactured in conformity with the high, so-called Philharmonic pitch. A representation was not long since made on the subject to H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief, but without obtaining any favourable response. To replace the military instruments now in use by others of the proper pitch would cost money; and in a question between money and art, it is art, of course, that goes to the wall.

My last word on this subject appeared rather more than two years ago, in the form of a contribution to the Christmas number of *England*. This contribution, which sums up all I have to say on the subject, I here reproduce.

" For some years past rumours of discord within the musical profession on the subject of the singularly high pitch have reached the ear of the general public. It is unfortunate that musicians and musical artists should not be able to live in constant and perpetual harmony; but I fear that a musical organization is apt to be rather a highly-strung one, and that a certain tendency to—shall I say irritability? —must unfortunately be recognized in the lives and careers of most musical composers;

and sad though it may be to confess it, musical performers, poets, and authors have been called an irritable race. But I am inclined to think, or to fear, that musical sensitiveness is peculiarly liable to disturbance, and that, although there have been countless kind-hearted and generous musicians, beginning with the Emperor of music, Beethoven, there have been very few creative or even executive artists who can lay a strong claim to the possession of perfect equability of temper.

"The question of the musical pitch, too, is one that affects the existence of some real artists, and the comfort and happiness—to say the least—of the great body of the musical profession. I cannot pretend to have no personal bias in the matter. No artist can continue to strain his voice continually to its utmost limits in the service of the public without impairing, more or less, the purity of its tone, and condemning himself to premature disappearance from the scene of action. For a similar reason, because I did not wish to play tricks with my voice and pass off upon the public what I should consider to be a second-rate performance, which would be painfully unsatisfactory to myself, I have constantly preferred to sacrifice large sums which I could ill afford to spare, and to disappoint that generous British public to which I am under the highest obligations, rather than strain my voice unduly, and give offence to the judicious by venturing to attempt what I could not heartily perform.

"It is well known in the musical profession that the only reason for which I have declined to sing in oratorios, at musical festivals, &c., for a few years past, has been the extreme height of the musical pitch adopted, which involves harmful, and sometimes fatal, exertions on the part of tenors and sopranos in particular.

"But the mere personal aspect of the question is, doubtless, beside the mark. It must be determined on general considerations of good taste, judgment, and expediency—and first, I must be allowed to say that authority would now seem to have determined this question very positively, as far as that country is concerned which is generally admitted to possess the chief voice in the matter of vocalization. It is known that all the leading composers of Italy, with Verdi at their head, have fixed for a lower musical pitch than that which prevails amongst ourselves; and that the Italian Government has accepted and acted on their conclusion. I think it must be obvious to all men that the great body of vocal artists have strong interest in urging the adoption of this pitch—that of the land of song. It is not a little painful to hear our admirable chorus singers, who may fairly compare with those of any country in the world, and possibly surpass all in mellowness of tone, labouring and straining to get up to the high notes. Instead of being a real pleasure to listen to them, it often becomes a positive pain. The same with the orchestra: the tone is thin and strident, and the effect of the very finest music is very gravely impaired, and the nerves kept on the stretch to listen even to such an overwrought performance.

"Now, what is to be said on the other side of the question? It has been contended that brilliancy of effect can only be secured by a high pitch. This seems to me like affirming that mere loudness can be substituted for genuine feeling and expression, or that glowing colours in painting are more effective than those of nature. The real truth is, that the opposition to the reform wished for by the great majority of artists arises mainly from a certain latent consideration, which is the usual characteristic of a Briton, and with which I have a strong sympathy myself—the objection to change, because it is change, even when that change is decidedly for the better. We are all under the influence of tradition and custom, and somehow an inordinately high pitch has come to be our rule. I do not wish to enquire how this has come about, or to attach any blame to individuals. We have learnt in our Latin grammars, *Humanum est errare.* Of one thing I am sure, that if, by any effort or sacrifice of mine, I can forward this great musical reform, I shall have earned the thanks of generations of singers yet unborn.

"Surely there is no country, no people that more naturally prefers true feeling and mellowness to theatrical and musical exaggeration than our own. We appreciate warmly the genuine article, but dislike stridency and fuss.

Considering the character of our musical genius, it has always been especially notable for taste and sweetness. Think of Purcell, Arne, Sterndale Bennett, Macfarren, and so many others: a certain golden moderation is our mark. Are we to be the people who go in for a wear and tear of strings and voices, which remind one only of 'tearing a passion to tatters?' 'Let us in the very torrent of passion acquire a temperance that may give it smoothness.' Smoothness, not violence; harmony, not stridency, is the cause for which I plead.

"I will not occupy the time of my readers any longer, though I could find it in my heart to say more. Vocalists and instrumentalists, composers and performers, and perhaps, most of all, the great British public itself, have a direct interest in a settlement which would secure the golden mean, and place musical England by the side of musical Italy, as the advocate of good taste and moderation of genuine feeling and unexaggerated mellowness of tone."

In my war against the unnaturally high pitch, I had some good allies, and none more ardent or more capable than my good friend, Shirley Brooks, who will long be remembered as Editor of *Punch*, and as the author of many clever novels and plays.

Here is a letter bearing on the subject, which I received from Shirley Brooks twenty years ago:—

"6, Kent Terrace,
"Regent's Park, N.W.
"9th Jan., 1869.

"My dear Sims Reeves.—An envelope had hardly gone off to you when your packet arrived. I suppose that after some eighteen years of friendship (by our Lady, 'tis a time), I need hardly say that I am more gratified to hear from you that I have been of any use than by any other recognition of it. Nevertheless, I do know how to set store by a friend's gift, and yours is *most welcome to me.* That, I know, is the best thanks I can give you.

"We shall eventually lick the instrumentalists, I suppose, but no doubt they will die hard. I shall be on the look-out for facts—as when a performance with the lowered pitch is stated to have gone triumphantly; and anything you can send, or tell me, of that kind, I will note. To me, unmusical, save in a power of intense enjoyment, it seems a sort of blasphemy to set the interest of brass-and-cat-gut against that of the human voice. I can understand rivalry between *the two manufacturers* being tolerated. But we 'work by wit, and not by witchcraft,' and must fight our way.

"How is Mrs. Reeves? Well, I hope. I send her a happy new year, so does the partner—of my expenses.

"Ever yours,

"SHIRLEY BROOKS."

# Chapter XXI.

## CHAPTER XXI.

I HOPE I have not nauseated my readers by the strong dose of "pitch" I have administered to them; but my excuse is a good one. It is time to put an end to our abnormally high diapason before it ruins all the good voices. As for the bad, their extermination need not be regretted. During my exceptionally long career of fifty years I am proud to say that I have always lived in amity with my brother and sister artists; and to singers who are entering the profession, as well as to those who have already made their mark, I wish too well not to offer the results of my observation and experience.

To all, old and young, I wish every possible success; and if, at any time, my advice should be needed by any, I can only say that I am altogether at their disposal. To quit for ever a career in which I have received so many marks of good-will cannot be otherwise than painful. But the keenness of my regret is in some degree mitigated by the reflection that I may still be able to render services in a sphere of activity closely connected with the one I am on the point of leaving. To teach singing, it is necessary first to have learnt it; and it will still be in my power to give instruction to others in the art which I have myself so assiduously practised.

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